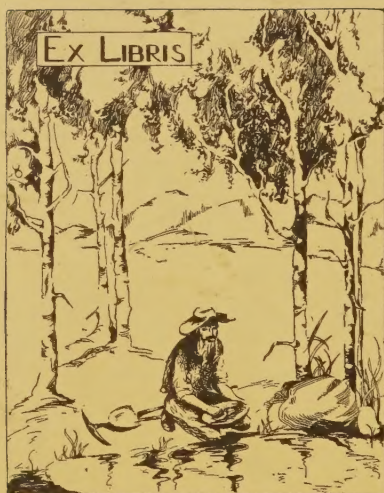


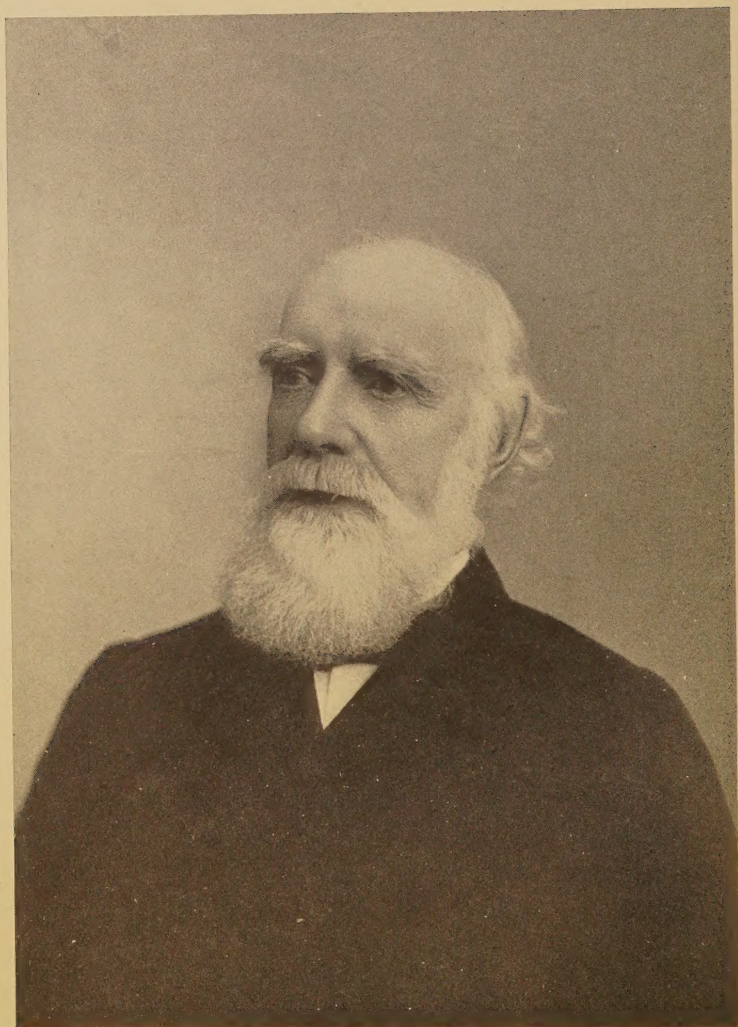
THE CONQUEST
OF THE GREAT
NORTHWEST
BY AGNES C. LAUT



WILLIAM TRACY HOVER

William Inagy Horv.

THE CONQUEST OF
THE GREAT NORTHWEST



Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, formerly Donald Smith;
Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

THE CONQUEST OF THE GREAT NORTHWEST

*Being the story of the ADVENTURERS OF ENGLAND
known as THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY. New pages
in the history of the Canadian Northwest and Western States.*

BY

AGNES C. LAUT

*Author of "Lords of the North,"
"Pathfinders of the West," etc.*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME II



NEW YORK
THE OUTING PUBLISHING COMPANY
MCMVIII

Copyright, 1908, by
THE OUTING PUBLISHING COMPANY

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England

All Rights Reserved

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II

PART III—(*Continued*)

CHAPTER XXI

	PAGE
"The Coming of the Pedlars" (<i>continued</i>)—Voyage up to Fort William, Life of Wild-wood Wassail and Grandeur There—How the Wintering Partners Exploited in the Pays D'en Haut	3

CHAPTER XXII

"The Coming of the Pedlars" (<i>continued</i>)—Henry's Adventures at Pembina—The First White Woman in the West—A Stolen Child and a Poisoner and a Scout—How Harmon Found a Wife—The Story of Marguerite Trottier	26
---	----

CHAPTER XXIII

"The Coming of the Pedlars" (<i>continued</i>)—Thirty years of Exploration—The Advance up the Saskatchewan to Bow River and Howse Pass—The Building of Edmonton—How MacKenzie Crossed the Pacific	47
---	----

CHAPTER XXIV

"The Coming of the Pedlars" (<i>continued</i>)—MacKenzie and McTavish Quarrel—The Nor'westers Invade Hudson Bay Waters and Challenge the Charter—Ruffianism of Nor'westers—Murder and Boycott of Hudson's Bay Men—Up-to-date Commercialism as Conducted in Terms of a Club and Without Law	68
--	----

CHAPTER XXV

David Thompson, the Nor'wester, Dashes for the Columbia—He Explores East Kootenay, but Finds Astor's Men on the Field—How the Astorians are Jockeyed out of Astoria—Fraser Finds His Way to the Sea by Another Great River	81
--	----

Contents

CHAPTER XXVI

	PAGE
The Coming of the Colonists—Lord Selkirk Buys Control of the H. B. C.—Simon M'Gillivray and MacKenzie Plot to Defeat Him—Robertson Says "Fight Fire with Fire" and Selkirk Chooses a M'Donell Against a M'Donell—The Colonists Come to Red River—Riot and Plot and Mutiny	113

CHAPTER XXVII

The Coming of the Colonists (<i>continued</i>)—MacDonell Attempts to Carry Out the Rights of Feudalism on Red River—Nor'westers Resent—The Colony Destroyed and Dispersed—Selkirk to the Rescue—Lajimoniere's Long Voyage—Clarke in Athabasca	141
---	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Coming of the Colonists (<i>continued</i>)—Governor Semple and Twenty Colonists are Butchered at Seven Oaks—Selkirk to the Rescue Captures Fort William and Sweeps the Nor'westers from the Field—The Suffering of the Settlers—At Last Selkirk Sees the Promised Land at Red River	166
---	-----

CHAPTER XXIX

Both Companies Make a Dash to Capture Athabasca Whence Came the Most Valuable Furs—Robertson Overland to Montreal, Tried and Acquitted, Leads a Brigade to Athabasca—He is Tricked by the Nor'westers, but Tricks Them in Turn—The Union of the Companies—Sir George Simpson, Governor	202
--	-----

PART IV

CHAPTER XXX

Reconstruction (<i>continued</i>)—Nicholas Garry, the Deputy Governor, Comes Out to Reorganize the United Companies—More Colonists from Switzerland—The Rocky Mountain Brigades—Ross of Okanogan	235
--	-----

Contents

CHAPTER XXXI

	PAGE
Journals of Peter Skene Ogden, Explorer and Fur Trader, Over the Regions now Known as Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Utah—He Relieves Ashley's Men of 10,000 Beaver—He Finds Nevada—He Discovers Mt. Shasta—He Tricks the Americans at Salt Lake	261

CHAPTER XXXII

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire (<i>continued</i>)—Douglas' Adventures in New Caledonia, How He Punishes Mur- der and is Himself Almost Murdered—Little Yale of the Lower Fraser—Black's Death at Kamloops—How Tod Outwits Conspiracy—The Company's Operations in California and Sandwich Islands and Alaska—Why did Rae Kill Himself in San Francisco?—The Secret Diplomacy	304
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Passing of the Company—The Coming of the Colonists to Oregon—The Founding of Victoria North of the Boundary—Why the H. B. C. Gave Up Oregon—Mis- rule of Vancouver Island—McLoughlin's Retirement	352
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Passing of the Company	387
--------------------------------------	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS

Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Map showing Fort Chippewyan and MacKenzie River	48
Alexander MacKenzie	56
The Ramparts of MacKenzie River	64
Map of the Northwest Territories	80
Map—Fraser to Tide Water	96
Lord Selkirk	120
Map of North America, showing various explorations	160
Red River Settlement	200
Sir James Douglas	240
Map—Showing Ogden and Ross Explorations	264
Peter Skene Ogden	272
John McLoughlin	312
Adam Thom	360
Fort Vancouver	376
Interior of Fort Garry	392
Map of North America, showing area of discovery	400

PART III—*Continued*

THE CONQUEST OF
THE GREAT NORTHWEST

THE CONQUEST OF THE GREAT NORTHWEST

CHAPTER XXI

1760-1810

“THE COMING OF THE PEDLARS” CONTINUED—
VOYAGE UP TO FORT WILLIAM, LIFE OF WILD-
WOOD WASSAIL AND GRANDEUR THERE—HOW
THE WINTERING PARTNERS EXPLOITED THE
NORTHWEST—TALES OF THE WINTERERS IN THE
PAYS D’EN HAUT

IT WAS no easier for the Nor’Westers to obtain recruits than for the Hudson’s Bay Company. French habitants were no more anxious to have their heads broken in other men’s quarrels than the Orkneymen of the Old Country; but the Nor’Westers managed better than the Hudson’s Bay. Brigades were made up as the ice cleared from the rivers in May. For weeks before, the Nor’Westers had been craftily at work. No agents were sent to the country parishes with clumsy offers

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

of £8 bounty, which would be, of itself, acknowledgment of danger. Companies don't pay £8 bounty for nothing. Not agents were sent to the parishes, but "sly old wolves of the North"—as one parish priest calls these demoralizers of his flock—went from village to village, gay, reckless, daredevil veterans, old in service, young in years, clothed in all the picturesque glory of beaded buckskin, plumed hats, silk sashes, to tickle the vanity of the poor country bucks, who had never been beyond their own hamlet. Cocks of the walk, bullies of the town, slinging money around like dust, spinning yarns marvelous of fortune made at one coup, of adventures in which they had been the heroes, of freedom—freedom like kings to rule over the Indian tribes—these returned voyageurs lounged in the taverns, played the gallants at all the hillside dances, flirted with the daughters, made presents to the mothers, and gave to the youth of the parish what the priest describes as "dizziness of the head." It needed only a little maneuvering for our "sly wolves of the North" to get themselves lionized, the heroes of the parish. Dances were given in their honor. The contagion invaded even the sacred fold of the church. The "sons of Satan" maneuvered so well that the holy festivals even seemed to revolve round their person as round a sun of glory. The curé might

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

preach himself black in the face proving that a camp on the sand and a bed *à la belle étoile*, under the stars, are much more poetic in the telling than in life; that voyageurs don't pass all their lives clothed in picturesque costumes chanting ditties to the rhythmic dip of paddle blades; that, in fact, when your voyageur sets out in spring he passes half his time in ice water to mid-waist tracking canoes up rapids, and that where the portage is rocky glassed with ice, you can follow the sorry fellow's path by blood from the cuts in his feet.

What did the curé know about it? There was proof to the contrary in the gay blade before their eyes, and the green country bucks expressed timid wish that they, too, might lead such a life. Presto! No sooner said than done! My hero from the North jerks a written contract all ready for the signature of names and slaps down half the wages in advance before the dazzled greenhorns have time to retract. From now till the brigades depart our green recruit busies himself playing the hero before he has won his spurs. He dons the gay vesture and he dons the grand air and he passes the interval in a glorious oblivion of all regrets drowned in potions at the parish inn; but it is our drummer's business to round up the recruits at Montreal, which he does as swiftly as they sober up. And they usually sober

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

up to find that all the advance wages have melted in the public house. No drawing back now, though the rosy hopes have faded drab! A hint at such a thought brings down on the poltroon's head threats of instant imprisonment—a fine ending, indeed, to all the brag and the boast and the brass-band flourish with which our runaway has left his native parish.

Crews and canoes assemble above Lachine, nine miles from Montreal, ninety or one hundred canoes with eight men to each, including steersman, and a pilot to each ten canoes. Thirty or forty guides there will, perhaps, be to the yearly brigade—men who lead the way and prevent waste of time by following wrong water courses. And it is a picturesque enough scene to stir the dullest blood, spite of all the curé's warning. Voyageurs and hunters are dressed in buckskin with gayest of silk bands round hair and neck. Partners are pompous in ruffles and lace and gold braid, with brass-handled pistols and daggers in belt. In each canoe go the cargoes—two-thirds merchandise, one-third provisions—oilcloth to cover it, tarpaulin for a tent, tow lines, bark and gum for repairs, kettles, dippers and big sponges to bail out water. As the canoes are loaded, they are launched and circle about on the river waiting for the signal of the head steersman. The chief steersman's steel-shod pole is held overhead. It drops—

“*The Coming of the Pedlars*”

five hundred paddles dip as with one arm, and there shoots out from the ninety-foot canoes the small, narrow, swift craft of the partners, racing ahead to be at the rendezvous before the cargoes arrive. Freight packers ashore utter a shout that makes the echoes ring. The voyageurs strike up a song. The paddles dip to the time of the song. The deep-throated chorus dies away in echo. The life of the *Pays d'en Haut* has begun.

Ste. Anne's—the patron saint of canoemen—is the last chapel spire they will see for many a year. The canoemen cross themselves in prayer. Then the Lake of the Two Mountains comes, and the Long Sault Rapids and the Chaudiere Falls, of what is now Ottawa City, and the Chat Rapids and thirty-six other portages in the four hundred miles up the Ottawa from Montreal, each portage being reckoned as many “pipes” long as the voyageur smokes, when carrying the cargo overland in ninety-pound packs on his back. Leaving the Mattawa at the headwaters of the Ottawa, the brigades strike westward for the Great Lakes, down stream through Nipissing Lake and French River to Lake Huron; easier going now with the current and sheer delight once the canoes are out on the clear waters of the lake, where if the wind is favorable, blankets are hoisted for a sail and the canoes scud across to the Sault. But it is

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

not always easy going. Where French River comes out of Nipissing Lake, ten crosses mark where voyageurs have found a watery grave, and sometimes on the lake the heavily laden canoes are working straight against a head wind that sends choppy waves ice-cold slapping into their laps till oilcloth must be bound round the prow to keep from shipping water where a wave-crest dips over and the canoe has failed to climb. Even mounting the waves and keeping the gun'els clear of the wash, at every paddle dip the spray splashes the voyageur to his waist. The "old wolves" smoke and say nothing. The bowman bounces back athwart so that the prow will lighten and rise to the climbing wave, but the green hands—the gay dons who left home in such a flush of glory—mutter "*c'est la misère, c'est la misère, mon bourgeois,*" *bourgeois* being the habitant's name for the partners of the Company; and misery it is, indeed, if ice glasses the canoe and the craft becomes frost-logged. They must land then and repair the canoe where the bark has been jagged, new bark being gummed on where the cuts are deep, resin and tar run along all fissures. And these Nor'Westers are very wolves for time. Repairs must be done by torchlight at night. In fair weather, the men sleep on the sand. In bad weather, tarpaulin is put up as a wind-break. Reveille is sounded

“*The Coming of the Pedlars*”

at first dawn streak—a bugle call if a partner is in camp, a shout from the chief steersman if the brigades have become scattered—“*Levé! Levé!*” By four in the morning, canoes are again on the water. At eight, the brigades land for breakfast. If weather be favorable for speed, they will not pause for mid-day meal but eat a snack of biscuit or pemmican as they run across the portages. Night meal comes when they can see to go no farther, and often relays of paddles are put on and the brigades paddle all night. The men have slim fare—grease and barley meal and pemmican, and the greenhorns frequently set up such a wail for the pork diet of the home table that they become known as the “*mangeurs de lard*,” “*the pork eaters*,” between Montreal and Lake Superior, or “the comers and goers,” because the men on this part of the voyage to the Up Country are freighters constantly coming and going. At each fresh portage the new hand must stand for treats to his comrades, or risk a ducking, or prove himself a better wrestler than they. At the hardest places and the hardest pace, the bourgeois unbends and gives his men a *régale*, which means rum.

The Sault at the west side of Lake Huron leading up to Lake Superior is the last military post—the outermost reach of the law’s arm. Beyond the Sault—as the priests had warned—is law of neither

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

God nor man. Beyond the Sault, letters from home friends to the voyageurs bear the significant address, "*Wherever He May Be Found.*"

At the Sault on the north side, the Nor'Westers constructed a canal with locks, for they had two sailing vessels patrolling the lakes—*The Otter* and *The Beaver*—one bound for the Detroit trade, the other from the Sault across Lake Superior. As the superstitious half-breeds passed from the Sault to Lake Superior, it was an Indian custom to drop an arrow on the shore as an offering to keep the devil from doing them harm on the boisterous waters of Lake Superior. Many a canoe was swamped by head winds crossing Lake Superior. To avoid risk, the brigades skirted close to the north shore, till they came to the Company's headquarters at Fort William, formerly known as Grand Portage.

Grand Portage was eighteen hundred miles from Montreal and lay at the foot of a hill, the buildings engirt by eighteen-foot palisades. It was here rival traders were usually stopped. When the Montreal merchants first went to the Northwest, their headquarters had been Michilimacinac, but this was too close to rival traders. The Frobishers and McGillivrays and McTavishes decided to seek some good location on the north shore of the lake leading directly to the Up Country. Grand Portage on

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

Pigeon River leading up to the height of land drained by Rainy River, was chosen for the fort, but when the American Boundary was specified by treaty, it was found that Grand Portage was in foreign territory. The partners looked for an eastern site that would still be on waterways leading toward Rainy River. The very year, 1785, that the Nor'Westers had petitioned the government for monopoly, they sent voyageurs seeking such a site. The man who led the voyageurs was that Edward Umfreville, who had been captured by the French on Hudson Bay, in 1782, and had now come to join the Nor'Westers. Umfreville found a chain of waterways leading up from Lake Superior to Lake Nipigon and from Nipigon west to Winnipeg River, but later, in 1797, Roderick MacKenzie found the trail of the fur traders in the old French régime—by way of Kaministiquia; and to the mouth of the Kaministiquia headquarters were moved by 1800, and the post named Fort William in honor of that William McGillivray who had bought out Peter Pond.

The usual slab-cut palisades surrounded the fort. In the center of the square stood the main building surmounted by a high balcony. Inside was the great saloon or hall—sixty feet by thirty—decorated with paintings of the leading partners in the full flush of ruffles and court costume. Here the partners

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

and clerks and leading guides took their meals. Round this hall were the partners' bedrooms; in the basement, the kitchen. Flanking the walls of the courtyard were other buildings equally large—the servants' quarters, storehouses, warerooms, clerks' lodgings. The powder magazine was of stone roofed with tin with a lookout near the roof commanding a view of the lake. There was also a jail which the voyageurs jocularly called their *pot au beurre*, or butter tub. The physician, Doctor McLoughlin, a young student of Laval, Quebec, who had been forced to flee west for pitching a drunken British officer of Quebec Citadel on his head in the muddy streets, had a house to himself near the gate. Over the gate was a guardhouse, where sentry sat night and day. Inside the palisades was a population of from twelve hundred to two thousand people. Outside the fort a village of little log houses had scattered along the river front. Here dwelt the Indian families of the French voyageurs.

Here, then, came the brigades from Montreal—seven hundred, and one thousand strong, preceded by the swift-traveling partners whose annual meeting was held in July. A great whoop welcomed the men ashore and they were at once rallied to the Canteen, where bread, butter, meal and four quarts of rum were given to each man. About the same time

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

as the canoes from the East arrived, the fur brigades from the West came in smaller canoes, loaded to the waterline with skins valued at £40 a pack. To these also was given a *régale*. Then twenty or a dozen kegs of rum were distributed to the Indian families; “and after that,” says one missionary, “truly the furies of Hell were let loose.” The gates were closed for reasons that need not be given, and the Nor’Westers often took the precaution of gathering up all the weapons of the Indians before the *boisson* or mad drinking bout began, but the rum-frenzied Indians still had fists and teeth left, and never a drinking bout passed but from one to a dozen Indians were murdered—frequently wives and daughters because they were least able to defend themselves—though the Indian murderer when sobered was often plunged in such grief for his deed that he would come to the white men and beg them to kill him as punishment. The stripping of all restraint—moral, physical, legal—has different effects on different natures. Some rise higher in the freedom. Others go far below the level of the most vicious beast. Men like Alexander MacKenzie and Doctor McLoughlin braced themselves to the shock of the sudden transition from civilization to barbarism and rose to renown—one as explorer, the other as patriot; but in the very same region where

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Alexander MacKenzie won his laurels was another MacKenzie—James—a blood relative, who openly sold native women to voyageurs and entered them as an asset on the Company's books; and in that very Oregon where McLoughlin won his reputation as a saint, was his son McLoughlin, notorious as a sot. Perhaps the crimes of the fur country were no greater than those committed under hiding in civilization, but they were more terrific, for they were undisguised and in open day where if you would not see them you must close your eyes or bolt the gates.

Inside the bolted gates where the partners lived, the code was on the whole one of decency and high living and pomp. In the daytime, the session of the annual meeting was held in secret behind barred doors. The entire Up Country was mapped out for the year's campaign. Reports were received on the past season, men and plans arranged for the coming year, weak leaders shifted to easy places, strong men, "old winterers," "the crafty wolves of the North," dispatched to the fields where there was to be the hardest fighting against either Indians or English, and English always meant Hudson's Bay.

But at night the cares of the campaign were laid aside. The partners dressed for dinner—ruffles and gold lace and knee breeches with gold-clasped garters and silver-buckled shoes. Over the richly laden

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

dinner table was told many a yarn of hardship and danger and heroism in the Up Country. The rafters rang with laughter and applause and song. Outside the gates among the voyageurs the songs were French; inside among the partners, Scotch. When plates were cleared away, bagpipes of the beloved Highlands, and flutes, and violins struck up and “we danced till daylight,” records Rod. MacKenzie; or “we drank the ten gallon kegs empty,” confesses Henry; it was according to the man. Or when more wine than wisdom had flowed from the festive board, and plates were cleared, the jolly partners sometimes straddled wine kegs, chairs, benches, and “*sauted*,” as one relates it—shot the rapids from the dining table to the floor ending up a wild night with wild races astride anything from a broom to a paddle round and round the hall till daylight peeped through the barred windows, or pipers and fiddlers fell asleep, and the servants came to pilot the gay gentlemen to bed. Altogether, it wasn’t such a dull time—those two weeks’ holidays at Fort William—and such revel was only the foam (“bees’ wings” one journal calls it) of a life that was all strong wine. Outside the gates were the lees and the dregs of the life—riot and lust.

It was part of the Nor’Westers’ policy to encourage a spirit of bluster and brag and bullying among the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

servants. Bluff was all very well, but the partners saw to it that the men could back up their bluff with brawn. Wrestling matches and boxing bouts were encouraged between the Scotch clerks and the French voyageurs. These took place inside the walls. Half the partners were Catholics and all the voyageurs. The Catholic Church did not purpose losing these souls to Satan. Not for nothing had the good bishop of Quebec listened to confessions from returned voyageurs. When he picked out a chaplain for Fort William, he saw to it that the man chosen should be a man of herculean frame and herculean strength. The good father was welcomed to the Fort, given ample quarters and high precedence at table, but the Catholic partners weren't quite sure how he would regard those prize fights.

"Don't go out of your apartments to-morrow! There's to be a *régale*! There may be fighting," they warned him.

"I thank you," says the priest politely, no doubt recalling the secrets of many a confessional.

From his window, he watched the rough crowds gather next day in the courtyard. As he saw the two champions strip to their waists, he doubtless guessed this was to be no chance fight. Hair tied back, at a signal, fists and feet, they were at it. The priest grew cold and then hot. He began to strip off gar-

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

ments that might hinder his own shoulder swing, and clad in fighting gear burst from his room and marched straight to the center of the crowd. No one had time to ask his intentions. He was a big man and the crowd stood aside. Shooting out both his long arms, the priest grabbed each fighter by the neck, knocked their heads together like two billiard balls, and demanded: "Heh? That's the way you bullies fight, is it? Eh? Bien! You don't know anything about it! You're a lot of old hens! Here's the way to do it! I'll show you how," and with a final bang of cracking skulls, he spun them sprawling across the courtyard half stunned. "If you have any better than these two, send them along! I'll continue the lessons," he proffered; and for lack of learners withdrew to his own apartments.

It is now necessary to examine how the Nor'-Westers blocked out their Northern Empire over which they kept more jealous guard than Bluebeard over his wives.

Take a map of North America. Up on Hudson Bay is the English Company with forts around it like a wheel. Of this circle, the bay is the hub. Eastward are the forts in Labrador; southward, Abbittibbi toward Quebec; westward, three lines of fur posts extending inland like spokes of the wheel—1st,

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

up Albany River toward the modern Manitoba—(*Mine*, water; *toba*, prairie, that is, country of the prairie water), along the valley of Red River to modern Minnesota (*Mine*, water; *sotar*, sky-colored, that is, country of the sky-colored water), and up the winding Assiniboine (country of the stone boilers where the Assiniboines cooked food on hot stones) to the central prairie; 2nd, up Hayes River from York (Nelson) to the Saskatchewan as far as the Rockies; 3rd, up Churchill River from Churchill Fort to Portage de Traite and Isle a la Crosse and far-famed Athabasca and MacKenzie River.

The wheel that has for its hub Hudson Bay, has practically only five spokes—two, eastward; three, westward. Between these unoccupied spokes are areas the size of a Germany or a Russia or a France. Into these the Nor'Westers thrust themselves like a wedge.

Look at the map again. This time the point of radiation is Fort William on Lake Superior. Between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay northward for seven hundred miles is not a post. Into these dark, impenetrable, river-swamped forests the Nor'Westers send their men. Dangerous work, this! For some unaccountable reason the Indians of these shadowy forests are more treacherous and gloomy than the tribes of the plains. Umfreville passes

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

through their territory when he tries to find a trail westward not on American soil. Shaw, the partner, and Long, the clerk, are sent in to drum up trade. The field is entered one hundred miles east of Fort William at Pays Plat, where canoes push north to Lake Nipigon. First, a fort is built on Lake Nipigon named Duncan, after Duncan Cameron. Long stays here in charge. Shaw, as partner, pushes on to a house half way down to Albany on Hudson Bay. The Indians call Mr. Shaw "the Cat" from his feeble voice. A third hand, Jacque Santeron, is sent eastward to the Temiscamingue Lakes south of Abbittibbi. The three Nor'Westers have, as it were, thrust themselves like a wedge between the spokes of the Hudson's Bay Company from Moose River to Albany; but a thousand perils assail them, a thousand treacheries. First, the Frenchman Santeron loses courage, sends a farewell written on a birch-bark letter down to Long at Nipigon, and deserts bag and baggage, provisions and peltries, to the Hudson's Bay at Abbittibbi. Determined to prevent such loss, Long tears across country to Temiscamingue only to find Santeron's cabins abandoned and these words in charcoal on bark: "*Farewell my dear comrade; I go with daring and expect a good price for my furs with the English. With the best heart, I wish you luck. My regards to my*

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

partners. Good-by." But desertion and theft of Company goods are not the worst of it. Down at Nipigon, Long hears that the Indians of the North are going to murder "the Cat"—Mr. Shaw—probably to carry the plundered furs down to the Hudson's Bay. Long rushes to the rescue to find Shaw cooped up in the cabin surrounded by a tribe of frenzied Indians whom he tried in vain to pacify with liquor.

"My God! But I'm glad to see you," shouts Shaw, drawing Long inside the door. For a week the Indians had tried to set fire to his house by shooting arrows of lighted punk wood at it, but every window and crevice of the cabin bristles with loaded muskets—twenty-eight of them—that keep the assailants back. The Indians demand more liquor. Shaw gives it to them on condition they go away, but at daybreak back they come for more, naked and daubed with war paint from head to foot.

"More," shouts Long. "Come on then," throwing the doors wide open and rolling across the entrance a keg of gunpowder from which he knocks the lid. "One step across the door and we all perish together," cocking his pistol straight for the powder. Pell-mell off dashed the terrified Indians paddling canoes as fast as drunken arms could work the blades. Another time, Long discovers that his

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

Indian guide is only awaiting a favorable chance to assassinate him. A bottle of drugged liquor puts the assassin to sleep and another Indian with a tomahawk prevents him ever awakening. When Long retires, Duncan Cameron, son of a royalist in the American Revolution, comes to command Nipigon. Cameron pushes on up stream past Nipigon two hundred miles to the English post Osnaburg, where the Hudson's Bay man, Goodwin, welcomes the Nor'Wester—a rival is safer indoors than out, especially when he has no visible goods; but Cameron manages to speak with the Indians during his visit and when he departs they follow him back to the place where he has *cached* his goods and the trade takes place. Henceforth traders of the Nipigon do not stay in the fort on the lake but range the woods drumming up trade from Abbittibbi east, to Albany west.

Meanwhile, what are the brigades of Fort William doing? Fifteen days at the most it takes for the "goers and comers" of Montreal to exchange their cargo of provisions for the Northerners' cargo of furs. When the big canoes head back for the East at the end of July, the Montreal partners go with them. Smaller canoes, easier to portage and in more numerous brigades, set out for the West with the wintering partners. These are "the wolves of

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the North"—the MacKenzies and Henry and Harmon and Fraser and a dozen others—each to command a wilderness empire the size of a France or a Germany.

By the new route of Kaministiquia, it is only a day's paddling beyond the first long portage to the height of land. Beyond this, the canoes launch down stream, gliding with the current and "somer-setting" or shooting the smaller rapids, portaging when the fall of water is too turbulent. Wherever there is a long portage there stands a half-way house—wayside inn of logs and thatch roof where some stray Frenchman sells fresh food to the voyageurs—a great nuisance to the impatient partners, for the men pause to parley. First of the labyrinthine waterways that weave a chain between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg is Rainy River, flowing northwest to Lake of the Woods, or Lake of the Isles as the French called it. On Rainy River are the ruins of an old fort of the French traders. Here the North-bound brigades often meet the Athabasca canoes which can seldom come down all the way as far as Fort William and go back to Athabasca before winter. Again an exchange of goods takes place, and the Athabasca men head back with the North-bound brigades.

Wherever the rivers widen to lakes as at Lake

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

Francis and Lake of the Woods, the canoes swing abreast, lash gun'els together by thwarting paddles, hoist sails and drift lazily forward on the forest-shadowed, placid waters, crews smoking, or singing with weird cadences amid the loneliness of these silent places. In this part of the voyage, while all the brigades were still together, there were often as many as five hundred canoes spread out on the lakes like birds on wing. Faces now bronzed almost to the shade of woodland creatures, splashes of color here and there where the voyageurs' silk scarf has not faded, blue sky above with a fleece of clouds, blue sky below with a fleece of clouds and all that marked where sky began and reflection ended the margin of the painted shores etched amber in the brown waters—the picture was one that will never again be witnessed in wilderness life. Sometimes as the canoes cut a silver trail across the lakes, leather tepee tops would emerge from the morning mists telling of some Cree hunters waiting with their furs, and one of the partners would go ashore to trade, the crew camping for a day. Every such halt was the chance for repairing canoes. Camp fires sprang up as if by magic. Canoes lay keel up and tar was applied to all sprung seams, while the other boatmen got lines out and laid up supplies of fresh fish. That night the lake would twinkle with

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

a hundred fires and an army of voyageurs lie listening to the wind in the pines. The next day, a pace would be set to make up for lost time.

Lake of the Woods empties into Winnipeg River through a granite gap of cataract. The brigades skirted the falls across the Portage of the Rat (modern Rat Portage) and launched down the swift current of Winnipeg River that descends northward to Lake Winnipeg in such a series of leaps and waterfalls it was long known among the voyageurs as White or Foaming River. Where the river entered the south-east end of Lake Winnipeg, were three trading posts—the ruins of the old French fort, Maurepas, the Nor'Westers' fort known as Bas de la Riviere, and the Hudson's Bay Post, now called Fort Alexander—some three miles from the lake.

This was the lake which Kelsey, and perhaps Radisson and Hendry and Cocking, had visited from Hudson Bay. It was forty days straight west from Albany, three weeks from York on the Hayes.

At this point the different brigades separated, one going north to the Athabasca, one west up the Saskatchewan to the Rockies, one southwest across the lake to Dauphin and Swan Lake and what is now northwestern Manitoba, two or three south up Red River destined for Pembina at the Boundary, Grand Forks, the Mandanes on the Missouri, and the posts

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

along the Assiniboine River of the middle West. Look again to the map. What kind of an empire do these Nor'Westers encompass? All of the great West, all except the unknown regions of the Pacific Coast. In size how large? The area of the Russian Empire. No wonder Simon McTavish, founder of the Company, wore the airs of an emperor, and it is to be remembered that Nor'Westers ruled with the despotism of emperors, too.

Let us follow the different brigades to their destinations.

Notes to Chapter XXI.—The contents of Chapter XXI are drawn from the Journals of the Northwest partners as published by Senator Masson, from Long's Voyages, from private journals in my own collection of manuscripts, chiefly Colin Robertson's, and from the Abbé Dugas' inimitable store of Northwest legends in several volumes. The story of the recruiting officers and of the holy father comes chiefly from Dugas. Umfreville's book does not give details of his voyage for the N. W. C. to Nipigon, but he left a journal from which Masson gives facts, and there are references to his voyage in N. W. C. petitions to Parliament. Cameron tells his own story of Nipigon in the Masson Collection. The best descriptions of Fort William are in Colin Robertson's letters (M. S.) and "Franchere's Voyage." In following N. W. C. expansion, it was quite impossible to do so chronologically. It could be done only by grouping the actors round episodes. For instance, in Nipigon, Long was there off and on in 1768, '72, '82. Cameron did not come on the scene till '96 and did not take up residence till 1802 to 1804. To scatter this account of Nipigon chronologically would be to confuse it. Again, Umfreville found the Nipigon trail to the Up Country, in 1784. Rod. MacKenzie did not find the old Kaministiquia road till the nineties. Or again, Grand Portage was a rendezvous till 1797 and was not entirely moved to Fort William till 1801 and 1802. Why separate these events by the hundred other episodes of the Company's history purely for the sake of sequence on dates? I have tried to keep the story grouped round the main thread of one forward movement—the domination of the Up Country by the N. W. C.

CHAPTER XXII

1790-1810

“THE COMING OF THE PEDLARS” CONTINUED—
HENRY’S ADVENTURES AT PEMBINA—THE FIRST
WHITE WOMAN IN THE WEST—A STOLEN CHILD
AND A POISONER AND A SCOUT—HOW HARMON
FOUND A WIFE—THE STORY OF MARGUERITE
TROTIER.

STRIKING across Lake Winnipeg from Winnipeg River, the southbound canoes ascend the central channel of the three entrances to Red River, passing Nettley Creek on the west, or River au Mort, as the French called it, in memory of the terrible massacre of Cree families by Sioux raiders in 1780, while the women and children were waiting here for the men to return from York Factory. South of Lake Winnipeg, the woodland banks of the mud-colored river give place to glimpses and patches of the plains rolling westward in seas of billowing grass. It was August when the brigades left Fort William. It is September now, with the crisp nutty tang of parched grasses in the air, a shimmer as of Indian summer across the horizon

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

that turns the setting sun to a blood-red shield. Bluest of blue are the prairie skies. Scarcely a feathering of wind clouds, and where the marsh lands lie—"sloughs" and "muskegs," they are called in the West—so still is the atmosphere of the primeval silences that the waters are glass with the shadows of the rushes etched as by stencil. Here and there, thin spirals of smoke rise from the far prairie—camp fires of wandering Assiniboine and Cree and Saulteur. The brigades fire guns to call them to trade, or else land on the banks and light their own signal fires. Past what is now St. Peter's Indian Reserve, and the two Selkirk towns, and the St. Andrew Rapids where, if water is high, canoes need only be tracked, if low the voyageurs may step from stone to stone; past the bare meadow where to-day stands the last and only walled stone fort of the fur trade, Lower Fort Garry—the brigades come to what is now Winnipeg, the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine.

Of the French fur traders' old post here, all that remains are the charred ruins and cellars. Near the flats where the two rivers overflow in spring are the high scaffoldings of a Cree graveyard used during the smallpox plague of the eighties. Back from the swamp of the forks are half a dozen tents—Hudson's Bay traders—that same Robert Good-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

win whom Cameron tricked at Osnaburg, come up the Albany River and across country to Manitoba—forty days from the bay—with another trader, Brown.

The Nor'West brigades pause to divide again. A dozen canoes go up the Assiniboine for Portage la Prairie and Dauphin, and Swan Lake, and Lake Manitoba and Qu'Appelle, and Souris. Three or four groups of men are detailed to camp at the Forks (Winnipeg) and trade and keep an eye on the doings of the Hudson's Bay—above all keep them from obtaining the hunt. When not trading, the men at the Forks are expected to lay up store of pemmican meat for the other departments, by buffalo hunting. Not till the winter of 1807-8 does MacDonald of Garth, a wiry Highlander of military family and military air, with a red head and a broken arm—build a fort here for the Nor'Westers, which he ironically calls Gibraltar because it will command the passage of both rivers, though there was not a rock the size of his hand in sight. Gibraltar is very near the site of the Cree graveyard and boasts strong palisades with storage cellars for liquors and huge warehouses for trade. Not to be outdone, the Hudson's Bay look about for a site that shall also command the river, and they choose two miles farther down Red River, where their cannon can sweep all

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

incoming and outgoing canoes. When this fort is built a few years later, it is called Fort Douglas.

Two brigades ascend the Red as far south as Pembina south of the Boundary, one to range all regions radiating from Grand Forks and Pembina, the other to cross country to the Mandanes on the Missouri.

Charles Chaboillez sends Antoine Larocque with two clerks and two voyageurs from the Assiniboine and the Red to the Missouri in 1804, where they meet the American explorers, Lewis and Clarke, with forty men on their way to the Pacific; and, to the Nor'Westers' amazement, are also Hudson's Bay traders. The American officers draw the Canadians' attention to the fact—this is American territory. British flags must not be given to the Indians and no "*derouines*" are to take place—a trade term meaning that the drummers who come to beat up trade are not to draw the Indians away to British territory. Charbonneau, the Northwest voyageur, ignores his debt to the Company and deserts to become guide for Lewis and Clarke.

"I can hardly get a skin when the Hudson's Bay trader is here," complains Larocque, "for the Englishmen speak the Mandan language." Nevertheless Larocque dispatches to the bourgeois Mr. Chaboillez on the Assiniboine, six packs worth £40

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

each. Charles MacKenzie, the clerk, remains three years trading among the Mandans for the Nor'-Westers, and with true trader's instinct chuckles within himself to hear Old Serpent, the Indian Chief, boast that if he had these forty Americans "out on the plains, his young warriors would do for them as for so many wolves."

Two main trails ran from the Red River to the Missouri: one from Pembina, west; the other from the Assiniboine, by way of Souris, south. The latter was generally followed, and from the time that David Thompson, the Northwest surveyor, first led the way to the Mandans, countless perils assailed the traveler to the Missouri. Not more than \$3000 worth of furs were won a year, but the traders here were the buffalo hunters that supplied the Northern departments with pemmican; and on these hunts was the constant danger of the Sioux raiders. Eleven days by pony travel was the distance from the Assiniboine to the Missouri, and on the trail was terrible scarcity of drinking water. "We had steered to a lake," records MacKenzie of the 1804 expedition, "but found it dry. We dug a pit. It gave a kind of stinking liquid of which we all drank, which seemed to increase our thirst. We passed the night with great uneasiness. Next day, not a drop of water was to be found on the route and our distress

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

became unsupportable. Lafrance (the voyageur) swore so much he could swear no more and gave the country ten thousand times to the Devil. His eyes became so dim or blurred we feared he was nearing a crisis. All our horses became so unruly we could not manage them. It struck me they might have scented water and I ascended the top of the hill where to my great joy I discovered a small pool. I ran and drank plentifully. My horse had plunged in before I could stop him. I beckoned Lafrance. He seemed more dead than alive, his face a dark hue, a thick scurf around his mouth. He instantly plunged in the water . . . and drank to such excess I fear the consequences."

In winter, though there was no danger of perishing from thirst where snow could be used as water, perils were increased a hundredfold by storm. The ponies could not travel fast through deep drifts. Instead of eleven days, it took a month to reach the Assiniboine, one man leading, one bringing up the rear of the long line of pack horses. If a snow storm caught the travelers, it was an easy matter for marauding Indians to stampede the horses and plunder packs. In March, they traveled at night to avoid snow glare. Sleeping wrapped in buffalo robes, the men sometimes wakened to find themselves buried beneath a snow bank with the horses

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

crunched up half frozen in the blizzard. Four days without food was a common experience on the Mandane trail.

Of all the Nor'Westers stationed at Pembina, Henry was one of the most famous. Cheek by jowl with the Nor'Westers was a post of Hudson's Bay men under Thomas Miller, an Orkneyman; and hosts of freemen—half-breed trappers and buffalo runners—made this their headquarters, refusing allegiance to either company and selling their hunt to the highest bidder. The highest bidder was the trader who would give away the most rum, and as traders do not give away rum for nothing, there were free fights during the drunken brawls to plunder the intoxicated hunters of furs. Henry commanded some fifty-five Nor'Westers and yearly sent out from Pembina one hundred and ten packs of furs by the famous old Red River ox carts made all of wood, hubs and wheels, that creaked and rumbled and screeched their way in long procession of single file to waiting canoes at Winnipeg.

Henry had come to the wilderness with a hard, cynical sneer for the vices of the fur trader's life. Within a few years, the fine edge of his scorn had turned on himself and on all life besides, because while he scorned savage vices he could never leave them alone. Like the snare round the feet of a man

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

who has floundered into the quicksands, they sucked him down till his life was lost on the Columbia in a drunken spree. One can trace Henry's degeneration in his journals from cynic to sinner and sinner to sot, till he has so completely lost the sense of shame, lost the memory that other men can have higher codes, that he unblushingly sets down in his diary how, to-day, he broke his thumb thrashing a man in a drunken bout; how, yesterday, he had to give a squaw a tremendous pommelling before she would let him steal the furs of her absent lord; how he “had a good time last night with the H. B. C. man playing the flute and the drum and drinking the ten-gallon keg clean.” Henry's régime at Pembina became noted, not from *his* character, but from legends of famous characters who gathered there.

One night in December, 1807, Henry came home to his lodge and found a young Hudson's Bay clerk waiting in great distress. The Nor'Wester asked the visitor what was wanted. The intruder begged that the others present should be sent from the room. Henry complied, and turned about to discover a young white woman disguised in man's clothes, who threw herself on her knees and implored Henry to take pity on her. Her lover of the Orkney Islands had abandoned her. Dressed in man's garb, she had joined the Hudson's Bay service and pursued him

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

to the wilderness. In Henry's log cabin, her child was born. Henry sent mother and infant daughter across to Mr. Haney of the Hudson's Bay Company, who forwarded both to the recalcitrant Orkneyman—John Scart, at Grand Forks. Before her secret was discovered, according to legend, the woman had been in Hudson's Bay service of Red River Department for four years. Mother and child were sent back to the Orkneys, where they came to destitution.

At Pembina, there always camped a great company of buffalo hunters. Among these had come, in the spring of 1806, a young bride from Three Rivers—the wife of J. Ba'tiste Lajimoniere, one of the most famous scouts of the Hudson's Bay Company. J. Ba'tiste had gone down to Quebec the year before and cut a swath of grandeur in the simple parish of Three Rivers that captured the heart of Marie Anne Gaboury, and she came to the wilderness as his wife.

To the Indian wives of the Frenchmen in the free-men's camp, Madame Lajimoniere was a marvel—the first white woman they had ever beheld. They waited upon her with adoration, caressed her soft skin and hair, and handled her like some strange toy. One, especially, under show of friendliness, came to Marie's wigwam to cook, but J. Ba'tiste's conscience took fright. The friendly squaw had

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

been a cast-off favorite of his own wild days, and from the Indians he learned that she had come to cook for Marie in order to poison her. J. Ba'tiste promptly struck camp, packed his belongings and carried his wife back to the safety of the fort at Pembina. There, on the 6th of January 1807, the first white child of the West was born; and they called her name Reine, because it was the king's birthday.

When Henry moved his fifty men from Pembina up the Saskatchewan, in 1808, among the free traders who went up with the brigades were the Lajimoni-eres. Word of the white woman ran before the advancing traders by "moccasin telegram," and wherever pause was made, Indians flocked in thousands to see Marie Gaboury. Belgrade, a friend of Ba'tiste's, thought it well to protect her by spreading in advance the report—that the white woman had the power of the evil eye; if people offended her, she could cause their death by merely looking at them, and the ruse served its purpose until they reached Edmonton. This was the danger spot—the center of fearful wars waged by Blackfeet and Cree. Marauding bands were ever on the alert to catch the traders short-handed, and in the earliest days, when Longmore, and Howse, and Bird, and Turner, the astronomer, were commanders of the Hudson's Bay

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

fort, Shaw and Hughes of Nor'Westers, the dangers from Indian attack were so great that the rival traders built their forts so that the palisades of one joined the stockades of the other, and gates between gave passage so the whites could communicate without exposing themselves. Towers bristling with muskets commanded the gates, and many a time the beleaguered chief factor, left alone with the women while his men were hunting, let blaze a fire of musketry from one tower, then went to the other tower and let go a cross fire, in order to give the Indians the impression that more than one man was on guard. This, at least, cleared the ambushed spies out of the high grass so that the fort could have safe egress to the river.

Here, then, came Marie Gaboury, in 1808, to live at Edmonton for four years. Ba'tiste, as of old, hunted as freeman, and strange to say, he was often accompanied by his dauntless wife to the hunting field. Once, when she was alone in her tepee on the prairie, the tent was suddenly surrounded by a band of Cree warriors. When the leader lifted the tent flap, Marie was in the middle of the floor on her knees making what she thought was her last prayer. A white renegade wandering with the Crees called out to her not to be afraid—they were after Blackfeet. Ba'tiste's horror may be guessed when he came

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

dashing breathless across the prairie and found his wife's tent surrounded by raiders.

"Marie! Marie!" he shouted, hair streaming to the wind, and unable to wait till he reached the tepee, "Marie—are you alive?"

"Yes," her voice called back, "but I—am—dying—of fright."

Ba'tiste then persuaded the Crees that white women were not used to warriors camping so near, and they withdrew. Then he lost no time in shifting camp inside the palisades of Edmonton. The Abbé Dugas tells of another occasion when Marie was riding a buffalo pony—one of the horses used as a swift runner on the chase—her baby dangling in a moss bag from one of the saddle pommels. Turning a bluff, the riders came on an enormous herd of buffalo. The sudden appearance of the hunters startled the vast herd. With a snort that sent clouds of dust to the air, there was a mad stampede, and true to his life-long training, Marie's pony took the bit in his mouth and bolted, wheeling and nipping and kicking and cutting out the biggest of buffaloes for the hunt, just as if J. Ba'tiste himself were in the saddle. Bounced so that every breath seemed her last, Marie Gaboury hung to the baby's moss bag with one hand, to the horse's mane with the other, and commended her soul to God; but J.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Ba'tiste's horse had cut athwart the race and he rescued his wife. That night she gave birth to her second daughter, and they jocularly called her "Laprairie." Such were the adventures of the pioneer women on the prairie. The every day episodes of a single life would fill a book, and the book would record as great heroism as ever the Old World knew of a Boadicea or a Joan of Arc. We are still too close to these events of early Western life to appreciate them. Two hundred years from now, when time has canonized such courage, the Marie Gaboury's of pioneer days will be regarded as the Boadiceas and Joan of Arcs of the New World.

There was constant shifting of men in the different departments of the Northwest Company. When Henry passed down Red River, in 1808, to go up the Saskatchewan, half the brigades struck westward from the Forks (Winnipeg), up the Assiniboine River to Portage la Prairie and Souris, and Qu' Appelle and Dauphin and Swan Lake. Each post of this department was worth some £700 a year to the Nor'Westers. Not very large returns when it is considered that a keg of liquor costing the Company less than \$10 was sold to the Indians for one hundred and twenty beaver valued at from \$2.00 to \$3.00 a skin. "Mad" McKay, a Mr. Miller and James Sutherland were the traders for the Hudson's

“*The Coming of the Pedlars*”

Bay in this region, which included the modern provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Among the Nor'Westers, McLeod was the wintering partner and his chief clerks were the mystic dreamers—Harmon, that Louis Primo, who had deserted from Matthew Cocking on the Saskatchewan, and Cuthbert Grant, the son of a distinguished Montreal merchant and a Cree mother, who combined in himself the leadership qualities of both races and rapidly rose to be the chosen chief of the Freeman or Half-Breed Rangers known as the *Bois Brulés*—men of “the burnt or blazed woods.”

The saintly Harmon had been shocked to find his bourgeois Norman McLeod with an Indian spouse, but to different eras are different customs and he presently records in his diary that he, too, has taken an Indian girl for a wife—the daughter of a powerful chief—because, Harmon explains to his own uneasy conscience, “if I take her I am sure I shall get *all* the furs of the Crees,” and who shall say that in so doing, Harmon did either better or worse than the modern man or woman, who marries for worldly interests? Let it be added—that, having married her, Harmon was faithful to the daughter of the Cree chief all his days and gave her the honor due a white wife. In the case of the fur traders, there was a deep, potent reason for these marriages

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

between white men and Indian women. The white trader was one among a thousand hostiles. By marrying the daughter of a chief, he obtained the protection of the entire tribe. Harmon was on the very stamping ground of the fights between Cree and Sioux. By allying himself with his neighbors, he obtained stronger defense than a hundred palisaded forts.

The danger was not small, as a single instance will show. Until May each year, Harmon spent the time gathering the furs, which were floated down the Assiniboine to Red River. It was while the furs were being gathered that the Sioux raiders would swoop from ambush in the high grasses and stampede the horses, or lie in hiding at some narrow place of the river and serenade the brigades with showers of arrows. Women and girls, the papoose in the moss bag, white men and red—none were spared, for the Sioux who could brandish the most scalps from his tent pole, was the bravest warrior.

Among the hunters of Pembina was a French Canadian named Trottier married to a Cree woman. The daughter—Marguerite, a girl of sixteen—was renowned for her beauty. Indian chiefs offered for her hand, but the father thought she would be better cared for as the wife of a white man and gave her in marriage to a hunter named Jutras, who left Pem-

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

bina with Henry's brigades in 1808. Jutras went up the Assiniboine. A year later, Daniel MacKenzie appointed him and five others to take the Qu' Appelle furs down the Assiniboine to Red River. As usual, some of the partners accompanied the brigades for the annual meetings at Fort William. Daniel MacKenzie and McDonald of Garth—the bourgeois—were riding along the river banks some distances behind the canoes. Marguerite Trottier was in the canoe with Jutras, and the French were advancing, light of heart as usual, passing down Qu' Appelle River toward the Assiniboine. A day's voyage above the junction of the two rivers, the current shoaled, and just where brushwood came close to the water's edge, Jutras was startled by a weird call like a Sioux signal from both sides. Another instant, bullets and arrows rained on the canoes! Four of the six voyageurs tumbled back wounded to the death. Jutras and the remaining man lost their heads so completely they sprang to midwaist in the water, waded ashore, and dashed in hiding through the high grass for the nearest fort, forgetting the girl wife, Marguerite Trottier, and a child six months old. MacKenzie and McDonald of Garth sent scouts to rally help from Qu' Appelle to recover the furs. When the rescue party reached the place of plunder—not very far from the modern

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Whitewood—they found the four voyageurs lying on the sand, the girl wife in the bottom of the canoe. All had been stripped naked, scalped and horribly mutilated. Two of the men still lived. MacKenzie had advanced to remove the girl's body from the canoe when faint with horror at the sight—hands hacked, an eye torn out, the scalp gone—the old wintering partner was rooted to the ground with amazement to hear her voice asking for her child and refusing to be appeased till they sought it. Some distance on the prairie in the deep grass below a tree they found it—still breathing. The English mind cannot contemplate the cruelties of such tortures as the child had suffered. Such horrors mock the soft philosophies of the *life natural*, being more or less of a beneficent affair. They stagger theology, and are only explainable by one creed—the creed of Strength; the creed that the Powers for Good must be stronger than the Powers for Evil—stronger physically as well as stronger spiritually, and until they are, such horrors will stalk the earth rampant. The child had been scalped, of course! The Sioux warrior must have his trophy of courage, just as the modern grinder of child labor must have his dividend. It had then been suspended from a tree as a target for the arrows of the braves. Hardened old *roué* as MacKenzie was—it was too much for his blackened

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

heart. He fell on his trembling knees and according to the rites of his Catholic faith, ensured the child's entrance to Paradise by baptism before death. It might die before he could bring water from the river. The rough old man baptized the dying infant with the blood drops from its wounds and with his own tears.

Returning to the mother, he gently told her that the child had been killed. Swathing her body in cotton, these rough voyageurs bathed her wounds, put the hacked hands in splinters, and in all probability saved her life by binding up the loose skin to the scalp by a clean, fresh bladder. That night voyageurs and partners sat round the wounded where they lay, each man with back to a tree and musket across his knees. In the morning the wounded were laid in the bottom of the canoes. Scouts were appointed to ride on both sides of the river and keep guard. In this way, the brigade advanced all day and part of the following night, "the poor woman and men moaning all the time," records McDonald of Garth. Coming down the Assiniboine to Souris, where the Hudson's Bay had a fort under Mr. Pritchard, the Nor'Westers under Pierre Falçon, the rhyming minstrel of the prairie—the wounded were left here. Almost impossible to believe, Marguerite Trottier recovered sufficiently in a month

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

to join the next brigade bound to Gibraltar (Winnipeg). Here she met her father and went home with him to Pembina. Jutras—the poltroon husband—who had left her to the raiders, she abandoned with all the burning scorn of her Indian blood. It seems after the Sioux had wreaked their worst cruelty, she simulated death, then crawled to hiding under the oilcloth of the canoe, where, lying in terror of more tortures, she vowed to the God of the white men that if her life were spared she would become a Christian. This vow she fulfilled at Pembina, and afterward married one of the prominent family of Gingras, so becoming the mother of a distinguished race. She lived to the good old age of almost a hundred.

Another character almost as famous in Indian legend as Marguerite had been with Henry at Pembina and come north to Harmon on the Assiniboine. This was the scout, John Tanner, stolen by Shawnees from the family of the Rev. John Tanner on the Ohio. The boy had been picking walnuts in the woods when he was kidnapped by a marauding party, who traded him to the Ottawas of the Up Country. Tanner fell in good hands. His foster mother was chief of the Mackinaw Indians and quite capable of exercising her authority in terms of the physical. Chaboillez, the wintering partner, saw the boy at the Sault and inquiries as to who he

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

was put the foster mother in such a fright of losing him that she hid him in the Sault cellars. Among the hunters of Pembina were Tanner and his Indian mother, and later—his Indian wife. He will come into this story at a later stage with J. Ba'tiste Lajimoniere.

Notes to Chapter XXII.—I have purposely hung this chapter round Henry as a peg, because his adventures at Pembina, whence journeys radiated to the Missouri and the Assiniboine, merge into his life on the Saskatchewan and so across the Rockies to the Columbia—giving a record of all the N. W. C.'s departments, as if one traveled across on a modern railroad.

Henry's Adventures are to be found in his Journals edited by Dr. Coues and published by Francis P. Harper. Several reprints of Harmon's Journals have recently appeared. Harmon was originally from Vermont and one of his daughters until recently was prominent in Ottawa, Canada, as the head of a fashionable school. I can imagine how one of the recent reprints would anger Harmon's family, where the introduction speaks glibly of Harmon having taken a “native wife *ad interim*.” What those words “*ad interim*” mean, I doubt if the writer, himself, knows—unless his own unsavory thought, for of all fur traders Harmon was one of the most saintly, clean, honorable, and gentle, true to his wife as to the finest white woman.

I have referred to Daniel MacKenzie as an old *roué*. The reasons for this will appear in a subsequent chapter on doings at Fort William.

The adventures of Tanner will be found in James' life of him, in Major Long's travels, in Harmon, and in the footnotes of Coues's Henry, also by Dr. Bryce in the Manitoba History Coll., most important of all in the Minnesota Hist. Collections, where the true story of his death is recorded.

The adventures of Marguerite Trottier are taken from two sources: from McDonald of Garth's Journal (Masson Journals) and from the Abbé Dugas' Legends. I hesitated whether to give this shocking and terrible story, for the most thoughtless reader will find between the lines (and it is intended) more than is told. What determined me to give the story was this: Again and again in the drawing rooms of London and New York, I have

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

heard society—men and women, who hold high place in social life—refer to those early marriages of the fur traders to native women as something *sub rosa*, disreputable, best hidden behind a lie or a fig leaf. They never expressed those delicate sentiments to me till they had ascertained that tho' I had lived all my life in the West, I had neither native blood in my veins nor a relationship of any sort to the pioneer—not one of them. Then some such expressions as this would come out apologetically with mock modest Pharisaic blush—"Is it true that So and So married a native woman?" or "Of course I know they were *all* wicked men, for look how they married—Squaws!" I confess it took me some time to get the Eastern view on this subject into my head, and when I did, I felt as if I had passed one of those sewer holes they have in civilized cities. Of course, it is the natural point of view for people who guzzle on problem plays and sex novels, but what—I wondered—would those good people think if they realized that "the squaws" of whom they spoke so scornfully were to Northwest life what a Boadicea was to English life—the personification of Purity that was Strength and Strength that was Purity—a womanhood that the vilest cruelties could not defile. Then, to speak of fur traders who married native women as "all wicked" is a joke. Think of the religious mystic, Harmon, teaching his wife the English language with the Bible, and Alexander MacKenzie, who had married a native woman before he had married his own cousin, and the saintly patriot, Dr. McLoughlin—think of them if you can as "wicked." I can't! I only wish civilized men and women had as good records.

In this chapter I wished very much to give a detailed account of each N. W. C. department with notes on the chief actors, who were in those departments what the feudal barons were to the countries of Europe, but space forbids. It is as impossible to do that as it would be to cram a record of all the countries of Europe into one volume.

I have throughout referred to the waters as Hudson Bay; to the company as Hudson's. This is the ruling of the Geographical societies and is, I think, correct, as the charter calls the company "Hudson's Bay." The N. W. C. were sometimes referred to as "the French."

Charles MacKenzie and Larocque in their Journals (Masson Coll.) give the details of the Mandane trade. Henry also touches on it.

CHAPTER XXIII

1780-1810

“THE COMING OF THE PEDLARS” CONTINUED—
THIRTY YEARS OF EXPLORATION—THE ADVANCE
UP THE SASKATCHEWAN TO BOW RIVER AND
HOWSE PASS—THE BUILDING OF EDMONTON—
HOW MACKENZIE CROSSED TO THE PACIFIC.

WHILE fifty or a hundred men yearly ascended Red River as far as Grand Forks, and the Assiniboine as far as Qu' Appelle, the main forces of the Nor'Westers—the great army of wood-rovers and plain rangers and swelling, blustering bullies and crafty old wolves of the North, and quiet-spoken wintering partners of iron will, who said little and worked like demons—were destined for the valley of the Saskatchewan that led to the Rockies.

Like a great artery with branches south leading over the height of land to the Missouri and branches north giving canoe passage over the height of land to the Arctic, the Saskatchewan flowed for twelve hundred miles through the fur traders' stamping ground, freighted with the argosies of a thousand

canoes. From the time that the ice broke up in May, canoes were going and coming; canoes with blankets hoisted on a tent pole for sail; canoes of birch bark and cedar dugouts; canoes made of dried buffalo skin stitched and oiled round willow withes the shape of a tub, and propelled across stream by lapping the hand over the side of the frail gun'els. Indians squatted flat in the bottom of the canoes, dipping paddles in short stroke with an ease born of lifelong practice. White men sat erect on the thwarts with the long, vigorous paddle-sweep of the English oarsman and shot up and down the swift-flowing waters like birds on wing. The boats of the English traders from Hudson Bay were ponderously clumsy, almost as large as the Mackinaws, which the Company still uses, with a tree or rail plied as rudder to half-punt, half-scutt; rows of oarsmen down each side, who stood to the oar where the current was stiff, and a big mast pole for sails when there was wind, for the tracking rope when it was necessary to pull against rapids. Where rapids were too turbulent for tracking, these boats were trundled ashore and rolled across logs. Little wonder the Nor'Westers with their light birch canoes built narrow for speed, light enough to be carried over the longest portage by two men, outraced with a whoop the Hudson's Bay boats whenever they encountered each other on the

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

Saskatchewan! Did the rival crews camp for the night together, French bullies would challenge the Orkneymen of the Hudson's Bay to come out and fight. The defeated side must treat the conquerors or suffer a ducking.

Crossing the north end of Lake Winnipeg, canoes bound inland passed Horse Island and ascended the Saskatchewan. Only one interruption broke navigation for one thousand miles—Grand Rapids at the entrance of the river, three miles of which could be tracked, three must be portaged—in all a trail of about nine miles on the north shore where the English had laid a corduroy road of log rollers. The ruins of old Fort Bourbon and Basquia or Pas, where Hendry had seen the French in '54, were first passed. Then boats came to the metropolis of the Saskatchewan—the gateway port of the great Up Country—Cumberland House on Sturgeon Lake. Here, Hearne had built the post for Hudson's Bay, and Frobisher the fort for the Nor'Westers. Here, boats could go on up the Saskatchewan, or strike northwest through a chain of lakes past Portage de Traite and Isle a la Crosse to Athabasca and MacKenzie River. Fishing never failed, and when the fur traders went down to headquarters, their families remained at Cumberland House laying up a store of dried fish for the winter. Beyond Cumberland

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

House came those forts famous in Northwest annals, Lower Fort des Prairies, and the old French Nipawi, and Fort a la Corne, and Pitt, and Fort George, and Vermilion, and Fort Saskatchewan and Upper Fort des Prairies or Augustus—many of which have crumbled to ruin, others merged into modern cities like Augustus into Edmonton. On the south branch of the Saskatchewan and between the two rivers were more forts—oases in a wilderness of savagery—Old Chesterfield House where Red Deer River comes in and Upper Bow Fort within a stone's throw of the modern summer resort at Banff, where grassed mounds and old arrowheads to-day mark the place of the palisades.

More dangers surrounded the traders of the South Saskatchewan than in any part of the Up Country. The Blackfeet were hostile to the white men. With food in abundance from the buffalo hunts, they had no need of white traders and resented the coming of men who traded firearms to their enemies. There was, beside, constant danger of raiders from the Missouri—Snakes and Crows and Minnetaries. Hudson's Bay and Nor'Westers built their forts close together for defence in South Saskatchewan, but that did not save them.

At Upper Bow Fort in Banff Valley, in 1796, Missouri raiders surrounded the English post, scaled

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

the palisades, stabbed all the whites to death except one clerk, who hid under a dust pile in the cellar, pillaged the stores, set fire, then rallied across to the Nor'Westers, but the Nor'Westers had had warning. Jaccot Finlay and the Cree Beau Parlez, met the assailants with a crash of musketry. Then dashing out, they rescued the Hudson's Bay man, launched their canoes by night and were glad to escape with their lives down the Bow to Old Chesterfield House at Red Deer River.

Two years later, the wintering partners, Hughes and Shaw, with McDonald of Garth, built Fort Augustus or Edmonton. Longmore was chief factor of the Hudson's Bay at Edmonton, with Bird as leader of the brigades down to York Fort and Howse as "patroon of the woods" west as far as the Rockies. With the Nor'Westers was a high-spirited young fire eater of a clerk—Colin Robertson, who, coming to blows with McDonald of the Crooked Arm, was promptly dismissed and as promptly stepped across to the rival fort and joined the Hudson's Bay. Around Edmonton camped some three hundred Indians. In the crowded quarters of the courtyards, yearly thronged by the eastern brigades so that each fort housed more than one hundred men, it was impossible to keep all the horses needed for travel. These were hobbled and turned outside the palisades. It

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

was easy for the Indians to cut the hobbles, mount a Company horse, and ride free of punishment as the winds. Longmore determined to put a stop to this trick. Once a Cree horse thief was brought in. He was tried by court martial and condemned to death. Gathering together fifteen of his hunters, Longmore plied them with liquor and ordered them to fire simultaneously. The horse thief fell riddled with bullets. It is not surprising that the Indians' idea of the white man's justice became confused. If white men shot an Indian for stealing a horse, why should not Indians shoot white men for stealing furs?

From the North Saskatchewan to the South Saskatchewan ran a trail pretty much along the same region as the Edmonton railroad runs to-day. In May the furs of both branches were rafted down the Saskatchewan to the Forks and from the Forks to Cumberland House whence Hudson's Bay and Nor'Wester brigades separated. In 1804, McDonald of Garth had gone south from Edmonton to raft down the furs of the South Saskatchewan. Hudson's Bay and Nor'Westers set out together down stream, scouts riding the banks on each side. Half way to the Forks, the Nor'Westers got wind of a band of Assiniboines approaching with furs to trade. This must be kept secret from the Hudson's Bays.

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

Calling Boucher, his guide, McDonald of Garth, bade the voyageurs camp here for three days to hunt buffalo while he would go off before daybreak to meet the Assiniboines. The day following, the buffalo hunters noticed movements as of riders or a herd on the far horizon. They urged Boucher to lead the brigade farther down the river, but Boucher knew that McDonald was ahead to get the furs of the Assiniboines and it was better to delay the Hudson's Bay men here with Northwest hunters. All night the tom-tom pounded and the voyageurs danced and the fiddlers played. Toward daybreak during the mist between moonlight and dawn, when the tents were all silent and the voyageurs asleep beneath inverted canoes, Missouri raiders, led by Wolf Chief, stole on the camp. A volley was fired at Boucher's tent. Every man inside perished. Outside, under cover of canoes, the voyageurs seized their guns and with a peppering shot drove the Indians back. Then they dragged the canoes to water, still keeping under cover of the keel, rolled the boats keel down on the water, tumbled the baggage in helter-skelter and fled abandoning five dead men and the tents. When the raiders carried the booty back to the Missouri they explained to Charles MacKenzie, the Nor'Wester there, that they were sorry they had shot the white traders. It was a

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

mistake. When they fired, they thought it was a Cree camp.

From Edmonton was an important trail to Athabasca, ninety miles overland to what is now known as Athabasca Landing on Athabasca River and down stream to Fort Chippewyan on Athabasca Lake. This was the region Peter Pond had found, and when he was expelled for the murder of two men, Alexander MacKenzie came to take his place. Just as the Saskatchewan River was the great artery east and west, so the fur traders of Athabasca now came to a great artery north and south—a river that was to the North what the Mississippi was to the United States. The Athabasca was the south end of this river. The river where it flowed was called the Grand or Big River.

Athabasca was seventy days' canoe travel from the Nor'Westers' headquarters on Lake Superior. It was Alexander MacKenzie's duty to send his hunters out, wait for their furs, then conduct the brigades down to Rainy Lake. Laroux and Cuthbert Grant, the plains ranger, were his under officers. When he came back from Lake Superior in '88, MacKenzie sent Grant and Laroux down to Slave Lake. Then he settled down to a winter of loneliness and began to dream dreams. Where did Big River run beyond Slave Lake? It was a river

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

broadier than the St. Lawrence with ramparts like the Hudson. Dreaming of explorations that would bring him renown, he planned to accompany the hunters next year, but who would take his place to go down with the yearly brigades, and what would the other Northwest partners say to these exploring schemes? He wrote to his cousin Rory to come and take his place. As to objections from the partners, he told them nothing about it.

The first thing Rory MacKenzie does is to move Pond's old post down stream to a rocky point on the lake, which he calls Chippewyan from the Indians there. This will enable the fort to obtain fish all the year round. May, '89, Alexander MacKenzie sees his cousin Rory off with the brigades for Lake Superior. Then he outfits his Indian hunters for the year. Norman McLeod and five men are to build more houses in the fort. Laroux's canoe is loaded for Slave Lake. Then MacKenzie picks out a crew of one German and four Canadians with two wives to sew moccasins and cook. "English Chief" whom Frobisher met down at Portage de Traite years ago, goes as guide, accompanied by two wives and two Indian paddlers. Tuesday, June 2nd, is spent gumming canoes and celebrating farewells. June 3rd, 1789, at nine in the morning, the canoes push out, Mr. McLeod on the shore firing a salute

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

that sets the echoes ringing over the Lake of the Hills (Athabasca). Twenty-one miles from Chipewyan, the boats enter Slave River on the northwest, where a lucky shot brings down a goose and a couple of ducks. It is seven in the evening when they pitch camp, but this is June of the long daylight. The sun is still shining as they sit down to the luscious meal of wild fowl. The seams of the canoes are gummed and the men "turn in" early, bed being below upturned canoes; for henceforth, MacKenzie tells them, reveille is to sound at 3 A. M., canoes to be in the water by four. Peace River, a mile broad at its mouth, is passed next day, and MacKenzie wonders does this river flowing from the mountains lead to the west coast where Captain Cook found the Russians? Slave River flows swifter now. The canoes shoot the rapids, for the water is floodtide, and "English Chief" tells them the Indians of this river are called Slaves because the Crees drove them from the South. Sixty miles good they make this day before camping at half-past seven, the Indian wives sewing moccasins as hard as the men paddle, so hard indeed that when they come to a succession of dangerous rapids next day and land to unload, one canoe is caught in the swirl and carried down with the squaw, who swims ashore little the worse. This is the place—Portage des Noyes—where Cuthbert



Alexander Mackenzie, who discovered Mackenzie River and was first across the Rockies to the Pacific.

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

Grant lost five voyageurs going to Slave Lake three years before. June 9th, mid fog and rain and floating ice and clouds of mosquitoes, they glide into the beaver swamps of Slave Lake. Wild fowl are in such flocks, the voyageurs knock geese and ducks enough on the head for dinner. Laroux drops off here at his fort. The men go hunting. The women pick berries and Alexander MacKenzie climbs a high hill to try and see a way out of this foggy swamp of a lake stretching north in two horns two hundred miles from east to west. There was ice ahead and there was fog ahead, and it was quite plain “English Chief” did not know the way. MacKenzie followed the direction of the drifting ice. Dog Rib Indians here vow there is no passage through the ice, and the cold rains slush down in torrents. It is not dark longer than four hours, but the nights are so cold the lake is edged with ice a quarter of an inch thick. MacKenzie secures a Red Knife Indian as guide and pushes on through the flag-grown swamps, now edging the ice fields, now in such rough water men must bail to keep the canoes afloat, now trying to escape from the lake east, only to be driven back by the ice, west; old “English Chief” threatening to cut the Red Knife’s throat if he fails them. Three weeks have they been fog-bound and ice-bound and lost on Slave Lake, but they find their way out by

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the west channel at last, a strong current, a stiff wind and blankets up for sail. July 1st, they pass the mouth of a very large river, the Liard; July 5th, a very large camp of Dog Rib Indians, who warn them "old age will come before" MacKenzie "reaches the sea" and that the wildest monsters guard Big River. MacKenzie obtains a Dog Rib for a guide, but the Dog Rib has no relish for his part, and to keep him from running away as they sleep at night, MacKenzie takes care to lie on the edge of the filthy fellow's vermin-infested coat. A greenish hue of the sea comes on the water as they pass Great Bear Lake to the right, but the guide has become so terrified he must now be bodily held in the canoe. The banks of the river rise to lofty ramparts of white rock. Signs of the North grow more frequent. Trees have dwindled in size to little sticks. The birds and hares shot are all whitish-gray with fur pads or down on their feet. On July 8th, the guide escapes, but a Hare Indian comes along, who, by signs, says it is only ten days to the sea. Presently, the river becomes muddy and breaks into many channels. Provisions are almost gone, and MacKenzie promises his men if he does not find the sea within a week, he will turn back. On the 11th of July, the sun did not set, and around deserted camp fires were found pieces of whalebone.

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

MacKenzie's hopes mounted. Only the Eskimos use whalebone for tent poles. Footprints, too, were seen in the sand, and a rare beauty of a black fox—with a pelt that was a hunter's fortune—scurried along the sands into hiding. The Hare Indian guide began talking of "a large lake" and "an enormous fish" which the Eskimo hunted with spears. "Lake?" Had not MacKenzie promised his men it was to be the sea? The voyageurs were discouraged. They did not think of the big "fish" being a whale, or the riffle in the muddy channels the ocean tide, not though the water slopped into the tents under the baggage and "the large lake" appeared covered with ice. Then at three o'clock in the morning of July 14th, the ice began floundering in a boisterous way on calm waters. There was no mistaking. The floundering ice was a whale and this *was* the North Sea, first reached overland by Hearne of the Hudson's Bay, and now found by Alexander MacKenzie.

The story of MacKenzie's voyages is told elsewhere. He was welcomed back to Chippewyan by Norman McLeod on October the 12th at 3 P. M., and spent the winter there with his cousin, Rory. Hurrying to Lake Superior with his report next summer, Alexander MacKenzie suffered profound disappointment. He was received coldly. The truth

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

is, the old guard of the original Nor'Westers—Simon McTavish and the Frobishers—were jealous of the men, who had come in as partners from the Little Company. They had no mind to see honors captured by a young fellow like MacKenzie, who had only two shares in the Company, or \$8000 worth of stock, compared to their own six shares or \$24,000, and found bitter fault with the returns of furs from Athabasca, and this hostility lasted till McTavish's death in 1804. MacKenzie came back to pass a depressing winter ('90-'91) at Chippewyan when he dispatched hunters down the newly discovered river, which he ironically called "River Disappointment." But events were occurring that spurred his thoughts. Down at the meeting of the partners he had heard how Astor was gathering the American furs west of the Great Lakes; how the Russians were gathering an equally rich harvest on the Pacific Coast. Down among the Hare Indians of MacKenzie River, he had heard of white traders on the West coast. If a boat pushed up Peace River from Athabaska Lake, could it portage across to that west coast? The question stuck and rankled in MacKenzie's mind. "Be sure to question the Indians about Peace River," he ordered all his winter hunters. Then came the Hudson's Bay men to Athabasca: Turner, the astronomer, and Howse,

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

who had been to the mountains. If the Nor'Westers were to be on the Pacific Coast first, they must bestir themselves. MacKenzie quietly asked leave of absence in the winter of '91-'92, and went home to study in England sufficient to enable him to take more accurate astronomic observations. The summer of '92 found him back on the field appointed to Peace River district.

The Hudson's Bay men had failed to pass through the country beyond the mountains. Turner and Howse had gone down to Edmonton. Thompson, the surveyor, left the English Company and coming overland to Lake Superior, joined the Nor'Westers. It was still possible for MacKenzie to be first across the mountains.

The fur traders had already advanced up Peace River and half a dozen forts were strung up stream toward the Rockies. By October of '92, MacKenzie advanced beyond them all to the Forks on the east side and there erected a fort. By May, he had dispatched the eastern brigade. Then picking out a crew of six Frenchmen and two Indians, with Alexander McKay as second in command, MacKenzie launched out at seven o'clock on the evening of May 9, 1793, from the Forks of Peace River in a birch canoe of three thousand pounds capacity.

If the voyage to the Arctic had been difficult, it

was child's play compared to this. As the canoe entered the mountains, the current became boisterously swift. It was necessary to track the boat up stream. The banks of the river grew so precipitous that the men could barely keep foothold to haul the canoe along with a one hundred and eighty-foot rope. MacKenzie led the way cutting steps in the cliff, his men following, stepping from his shoulder to the shaft of his axe and from the axe to the place he had cut, the torrent roaring and re-echoing below through the narrow gorge. Sulphur springs were passed, the out-cropping of coal seams, vistas on the frosted mountains opening to beautiful uplands, where elk and moose roamed. An old Indian had told MacKenzie that when he passed over the mountains, Peace River would divide—one stream, now known as the Finlay, coming from the north; the other fork, now known as the Parsnip, from the south. MacKenzie, the old guide said, should ascend the south; but it was no easy matter passing the mountains. The gorge finally narrowed to sheer walls with a raging maelstrom in place of a river. The canoe had to be portaged over the crest of a peak for nine miles—MacKenzie leading the way chopping a trail, the men following laying the fallen trees like the railing of a stair as an outer guard up the steep ascent. Only three miles a day were made.

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

Clothes and moccasins were cut to shreds by brushwood, and the men were so exhausted they lay down in blanket coats to sleep at four in the afternoon, close to the edge of the upper snow fields. MacKenzie wrote letters, enclosed them in empty kegs, threw the kegs into the raging torrent and so sent back word of his progress to the fort. Constantly, on the Uplands, the men were startled by rocketing echoes like the discharge of a gun, when they would pass the night in alarm, each man sitting with his back to a tree and musket across his knees, but the rocketing echoes—so weird and soul-stirring in the loneliness of a silence that is audible—were from huge rocks splitting off some precipice. Sometimes a boom of thunder would set the mountains rolling. From a far snow field hanging in ponderous cornice over bottomless depths would puff up a thin, white line like a snow cataract, the distant avalanche of which the boom was the echo. Once across the divide, the men passed from the bare snow uplands to the cloud line, where seas of tossing mist blotted out earth, and from cloud line to the Alpine valleys with larch-grown meadows and painters' flowers knee deep, all the colors of the rainbow. Beside a rill trickling from the ice fields pause would be made for a meal. Then came tree line, the spruce and hemlock forests—gigantic trees, branches interlaced,

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

festooned by a mist-like moss that hung from tree to tree in loops, with the windfall of untold centuries piled criss-cross below higher than a house. The men grumbled. They had not bargained on this kind of voyaging.

Once down on the west side of the Great Divide, there were the Forks. MacKenzie's instincts told him the north branch looked the better way, but the old guide had said only the south branch would lead to the Great River beyond the mountains, and they turned up Parsnip River through a marsh of beaver meadows, which MacKenzie noted for future trade.

It was now the 3rd of June. MacKenzie ascended a mountain to look along the forward path. When he came down with McKay and the Indian Cancre, no canoe was to be found. MacKenzie sent broken branches drifting down stream as a signal and fired gunshot after gunshot, but no answer! Had the men deserted with boat and provisions? Genuinely alarmed, MacKenzie ordered McKay and Cancre back down the Parsnip, while he went on up stream. Whichever found the canoe was to fire a gun. For a day without food and in drenching rains, the three tore through the underbrush shouting, seeking, despairing till strength was exhausted and moccasins worn to tatters. Barefoot and soaked, MacKenzie was just lying down for the night when a crashing



From a photograph by Mathers.

The Ramparts of Mackenzie River.

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

echo told him McKay had found the deserters. They had waited till he had disappeared up the mountain, then headed the canoe north and drifted down stream. The Indians were openly panic-stricken and wanted to build a raft to float home. The French voyageurs pretended they had been delayed mending the canoe. MacKenzie took no outward notice of the treachery, but henceforth never let the crew out of his own or McKay's sight.

A week later, Indians were met who told MacKenzie of the Carrier tribes, inlanders, who bartered with the Indians on the sea. One old man drew a birch bark map of how the Parsnip led to a portage overland to another river flowing to the sea. Promising to return in two moons (months), MacKenzie embarked with an Indian for guide. On the evening of June 12th, they entered a little lake, the source of Peace River. A beaten path led over a low ridge to another little lake—the source of the river that flowed to the Pacific. This was Bad River, a branch of the Fraser, though MacKenzie thought it was a branch of the Great River—the Columbia. The little lake soon narrowed to a swift torrent, which swept the canoe along like a chip. MacKenzie wanted to walk along the shore, for some one should go ahead to look out for rapids, but the crew insisted if they were to perish, he must perish with them, and

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

all hands embarked. The consequence was that the canoe was presently caught in a swirl. A rock banged through the bottom tearing away the keel. Round swung the tottering craft to the rush! Another smash, and out went the bow, the canoe flattening like a board, the Indians weeping aloud on top of the baggage, the voyageurs paralyzed with fear, hanging to the gun'els. On swept the wrecked canoe! The foreman frantically grabbed the branch of an overhanging tree. It jerked him bodily ashore and the canoe flat as a flap-jack came to a stop in shallow sands.

There was not much said for some minutes. Bad River won a reputation that it has ever since sustained. All the bullets were lost. Powder and baggage had to be fished up and spread out to dry in the sun. One dazed voyageur walked across the spread-out powder with a pipe between his teeth when a yell of warning that he might blow them all to eternity—brought him to his senses and relieved the terrific tension.

The men were treated to a *régale*, and then sent to hunt bark for a fresh canoe. There now succeeded such an impenetrable morass blocked by windfall that the voyageurs made only two miles a day. Though MacKenzie and McKay watched their guide by turns at night, he succeeded in escaping,

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

and the white men must risk meeting the inland Carriers without an interpreter. On the 15th of June, Bad River turned westward into the Fraser. Of his parley with the Carriers, there is no space to tell. I have told the story in another volume, but somewhere between what are now known as Quesnel and Alexandria—named after him—it became apparent that the river was leading too far south. Besides, the passage was utterly impassable. Mac-Kenzie headed his canoe back up the western fork of the Fraser—the Blackwater River, and thence on July 4th, leaving the canoe and caching provisions, struck overland and westward. The Pacific was reached on the 22nd of July, 1793, in the vicinity of Bella Coola. By the end of August he was back at the Forks on Peace River, and at once proceeded to Chippewyan on Athabasca Lake, where he passed the winter.

CHAPTER XXIV

1780-1810

“THE COMING OF THE PEDLARS” CONTINUED—
MACKENZIE AND MCTAVISH QUARREL—THE
NOR’WESTERS INVADE HUDSON BAY WATERS
AND CHALLENGE THE CHARTER—RUFFIANISM OF
NOR’WESTERS—MURDER AND BOYCOTT OF HUD-
SON’S BAY MEN—UP-TO-DATE COMMERCIALISM
AS CONDUCTED IN TERMS OF A CLUB AND
WITHOUT LAW.

THE next spring, MacKenzie left the West forever. Again his report of discovery was coldly received by the partners on Lake Superior. The smoldering jealousy between Simon McTavish of the old Nor’Westers and Alexander MacKenzie broke out in flame. MacKenzie seceded from the Nor’Westers and with Pierre de Rocheblave and the Ogilvies of Montreal reorganized the Little Company variously known as “The Potties,” from “Les Petits,” and “the X. Y.’s” from the stamp on their pelts, X. Y., to distinguish them from the N. W. MacKenzie’s Journal was published. He was given a title in recognition of his services to the Empire. Now in possession of an

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

independent and growing fortune, he bought himself an estate in Scotland where the fame of his journal attracted the attention of another brilliant young Scotchman—Lord Selkirk. The two became acquainted and talked over plans of forming a vast company, that would include not only the X. Y.'s and Nor'Westers, but the Hudson's Bay and Russian companies. Hudson's Bay stock had fallen from £250 to £50 a share. With the aim of a union, MacKenzie and Selkirk began buying shares in the Hudson's Bay, and Selkirk comes on a visit to Canada.

Meanwhile—out in Canada—Simon McTavish, “the Marquis,” was not idle up to the time of his death. The Hudson's Bay had barred out other traders from Labrador. Good! Simon McTavish accepted the challenge, and from the government of Canada rented the old King's Domain of Southern Labrador for £1000 a year. The English company had forbidden interlopers on the waters of Hudson Bay. Good! The Nor'Westers accepted that challenge. Duncan McGillivray, a nephew of McTavish, dictates a letter to the ancient English company begging them to sue him for what he is going to do, so that the case may be forever settled in the courts. Then he hires Captain Richards away from the Company and sends him on the ship *Eddystone*, in 1803, straight into Hudson Bay, to establish a

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

trading post at Charlton Island and another at Moose for the Nor'Westers. The Hudson's Bay Company declines the challenge. They will not sue the North-West Company and so revive the whole question of their charter; but they sue their old Captain, John Richards, and order Mr. Geddes to hire more men in the Orkneys, and they freeze those interlopers out of the bay by bribing the Indians so that Simon McTavish's men retire from Charlton and Moose with loss. And the English Adventurers go one farther: they petition Parliament, in 1805, for "authority to deal with crimes committed in the Indian country."

Simon McTavish dies in 1804. The X. Y.'s and the Nor'Westers unite, and well they do, for clashes are increasing between Hudson's Bays and Nor'Westers, between English and French, from Lake Superior to the Rockies.

Down at Nipigon in 1800, where Duncan Cameron had attracted the Indians away from Albany, first blood is shed. Young Labau, a Frenchman, whose goods have been advanced by the Nor'Westers, deserts for the Hudson's Bay. Schultz, the Northwest clerk, pursues and orders the young Frenchman back. Labau offers to pay for the goods, but he will not go back to the Northwest Company. Schultz draws his dagger and stabs the boy to death. For

"The Coming of the Pedlars"

this, he is dismissed by the Nor'Westers, but no other punishment follows for the murder.

Albany River at this time was the trail inland from Hudson Bay to the plains, to the Red River and the Missouri and modern Edmonton. The Nor'Westers determined to block this trail. The Northwest partner, Haldane, came to Bad Lake in 1806 with five voyageurs and knocked up quarters for themselves near the Hudson's Bay cabins. By May, William Corrigan, the Hudson's Bay man, had four hundred and eighty packs of furs. One night, when all the English were asleep, the Nor'West bullies marched across, broke into the cabins, placed pistols at the head of Corrigan and his men, and plundered the place of furs. Never dreaming that Haldane, the Northwest partner, would countenance open robbery, Corrigan dressed and went across to the Northwest house to complain.

Haldane met the complaint with a loud guffaw. "I have come to this country for furs," he explained, "and I have found them, and I intend to keep them."

Red Lake in Minnesota belonged to the same Albany department. Before Corrigan could dispatch the furs to the bay, Haldane's bullies swooped down and pillaged the cabins there, this time not only of furs, but provisions.

Up at Big Falls near Lake Winnipeg, John Crear

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

and five men had built a fort for the English. One night toward fall a party of Northwest voyageurs, led by Alexander MacDonell, landed and camped. Next morning when all of Crear's men had gone fishing but two, MacDonell marched to the Hudson's Bay house, accused Crear of taking furs owed in debt to the Nor'Westers, and on that excuse broke open the warehouse. Plowman, a Hudson's Bay hunter, sprang to prevent. Quick as flash, MacDonell's dagger was out. Plowman fell stabbed and the voyageurs had clubbed Crear to earth with the butt ends of their rifles. Furs and provisions were carried off. As if this were not enough and ample proof that the accusation had simply been an excuse to drive the Hudson's Bay men off the field, MacDonell came back in February of 1807, surrounded Crear's house with bullies, robbed it of everything and had Crear beaten till he signed a paper declaring he had sold the furs and that he would never again come to the country.

This was no fur trading. It was raiding—such raiding as the Highlanders carried into the Lowlands of Scotland. It was a banditti warfare that was bound to bring its own punishment.

Besides Albany River, the two great river trails inland to the plains from Hudson's Bay were by Churchill River to Athabasca and by Hayes River to

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan. From 1805 J. D. Campbell was the Northwest partner appointed to block the advance inland to this region. John Spencer was at Reindeer Lake for the Hudson's Bay in 1808. Knowing when the Indians from the Athabasca were due, he had sent William Linklater out to meet them, and Linklater was snowshoeing leisurely homeward drawing the furs on a toboggan, when toward nightfall he suddenly met the Northwest partner and his bullies on the trail. There was the usual pretence that the furs were a debt owed to the Nor'Westers, and the hollowness of that pretence was shown by the fact that before Linklater could answer, a Northwest bully had seized his snowshoes and sent him sprawling. Campbell and the bullies then marched off with the furs. This happened twice at Caribou Lake.

But the worst warfare waged round Isle a la Crosse, the gateway to Athabasca. Peter Fidler went there in 1806 with eighteen men for the Hudson's Bay. Then came J. D. Campbell, the Nor'Wester, with an army of bullies, forbidding the Indians to enter Fidler's fort or Fidler and his men to stir beyond a line drawn on the sands. On this line was built a Nor'West sentry box, where the bullies kept guard night and day. For three years, Peter Fidler stuck it out, sending men across the line

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

secretly at night, directing the Indians by a detour down to the other Hudson's Bay forts and in a hundred ways circumventing his enemies. Then Campbell's bullies became bolder. Fidler's firewood was stolen, his fish nets cut, his canoes hacked to pieces. He was literally starved off the field and compelled to retire in 1809.

Down in Albany, things were going from bad to worse with Corrigan. The contest concentrated at Eagle Lake, half way between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg just where Wabigoon River intersects with the modern Canadian Pacific Railroad. The English company had strengthened Corrigan with more Orkneymen, and he had a strongly palisaded fort. But the Nor'Westers set the MacDonell clan with their French bullies on his trail.

An Indian had come to the post in September. Corrigan outfitted him with merchandise for the winter's hunt, and three English servants accompanied the *Saulteur* down to the shore. Out rushed the Nor'Wester, MacDonell, flourishing his sword accompanied by a bully, Adhemer, raging aloud that the Indian had owed furs to the Nor'Westers and should not be allowed to hunt for the Hudson's Bay. The two Corrigan brothers and one Tait ran from the post to the rescue. With one sweep of his sword Eneas MacDonell cut Tait's wrist off and with an-

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

other hack on his neck felled him to the ground. The French bully had aimed a loaded pistol at the Corrighals daring them to take one step forward. John Corrighal dodged into the lake. MacDonell then rushed at the Englishmen like a mad man, cutting off the arm of one, sending a hat flying from another whose head he missed, hacking the shoulder of a third. Unarmed, the Hudson's Bay men fled for the fort gates. The Nor'Westers pursued. Coming from the house door, John Mowat, a Hudson's Bay man, drew his pistol and shot Eneas MacDonell dead. Coureurs went flying to Northwest camps for reinforcements. Haldane and McLellan, two partners, came with a rowdy crew and threatened if Mowat were not surrendered they would have the Indians butcher every soul in the fort if it cost a keg of rum for every scalp. Mowat promptly surrendered and declared he would shoot any Nor'Wester on the same provocation.

For this crime and before the Company in England could be notified, Mowat was carried away in irons. Two servants—McNab and Russell—and one of the Corrighals volunteered to accompany him as witnesses for the defense. For a winter Mowat was imprisoned in the miserable butter vat of a jail at Fort William, and when it was found that every indignity and insult would not drive the three wit-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

nesses away, they were arrested as abettors of the so-called crime. At Mowat's trial in Montreal, of the four judges who presided, one was notoriously corrupt and two, the fathers of Northwest partners. Of the jury, half the number were Nor'Westers. Naturally, Mowat was pronounced guilty. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and branding. When he was discharged penniless, he set out through the United States to take ship for England. It is supposed that he was lost in a storm, or drowned crossing some of the New England rivers.

The rivalry between Hudson's Bay and Nor'Westers had become lawless outrage. The Company in England is meantime having troubles of its own. The English government desires them in 1807 to state what "the boundaries of Louisiana ought to be" in the impending treaty with the United States, which is to give access for American traders to the country north of Louisiana in return for similar free access for British traders to American territory. The English traders state what the boundaries of Louisiana ought to be, and to the ignorance of the English shareholders do we owe in this case, as in a hundred others, the fifty years' boundary dispute as to limits from the Lake of the Woods to Oregon.

As for reciprocity of access to each other's hunting field, the Hudson's Bay Company opposes it furi-

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

ously. Access to American territory they already have without the asking and are likely to have for another fifty years, as there is no inhabitant to prevent them, but to grant the Americans access to Hudson's Bay territory is another matter; so in the treaty of reciprocal favors across each other's territory, My Lord Holland provides “always the actual settlements of the Hudson's Bay Company excepted.”

If the Hudson's Bay Company is to hold its monopoly by virtue of settlements, it must see to the welfare of those settlements, so in June, 1808, the first schoolmasters of the Northwest are sent out at salaries of £30 a year—James Clouston, and Peter Sinclair, and George Geddes. There is no dividend, owing to the embargo of war, and the Company is driven, in 1809, to petition the Lords of Trade for help. They aver there are six hundred families at their settlements, that the yearly outfits cost the Company £40,000; that the sales never exceed £30,000 and this year are only £3,000; they apply for remission of duty on furs and a loan of £60,000 from the imperial treasury. The duty is remitted but the loan is not granted, and My Lord Selkirk becomes, by virtue of having purchased nearly £40,000 of stock, a leading director in the Hudson's Bay Company. My Lord Selkirk has been out to

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Montreal. He has been fêted and feasted and dined and wined by the Beaver Club of the Nor'-Westers, whom he pumps to a detail about the fur trade. Also he meets John Jacob Astor and learns what he can from him. Also he meets that Northwest clerk who had been dismissed up the Saskatchewan and came over to the Hudson's Bay Company—Colin Robertson. He brings Colin Robertson back with him to England, and the aforetime Northwest clerk is called on January 3, 1810, to give advice to the Hudson's Bay directors on the state of the fur trade in Canada.

But to return to that Louisiana Boundary—it is as great a shock to the Nor'Westers as to the Hudson's Bay. In the first place, as told elsewhere, the boundary treaty of 1798 has compelled them to move headquarters from Grand Portage to Fort William. The Nor'Westers suddenly awaken to the value of Alexander MacKenzie's voyage to the Pacific. Supposing he had followed that great river on down to the sea, would it have led him where the American, Robert Gray, found the Columbia, and where the explorers, Lewis and Clarke, later coming overland from the Missouri, wintered? It was determined to follow MacKenzie's explorations up with all speed. It became a race to the Pacific. Which fur traders

“The Coming of the Pedlars”

should pre-empt the vast domain first—Hudson’s Bay, Astor’s Americans, or Nor’Westers?

It is barely twenty years since Peter Pond came to Athabasca and Peace River region, but already there are six forts between Athabasca Lake and the Rockies—Vermilion and Encampment Island under the management of the half-breed son of Sir Alexander MacKenzie, then Dunvegan and St. John’s and Rocky Mountain House managed by the McGillivrays and Archibald Norman McLeod. By 1797, James Finlay had followed MacKenzie’s trail across the Divide, then struck up the north branch of Peace River, now known as Finlay River; but it was not till 1805 that the fur traders, who made flying trips across the mountains, remained to build forts. In 1793, when MacKenzie crossed the mountain, there had joined the Northwest Company as clerk, a lad of nineteen, the son of a ruined loyalist in New York State, whose widow came to live in Cornwall, Ontario. This boy was Simon Fraser. Two years later, in 1795, there had come to the Northwest Company from Hudson Bay that English surveyor, David Thompson, whom the MacKenzies had met in Athabasca working for the Hudson’s Bay traders. David Thompson had been born in 1770 and was educated in the Blue Coat School, London. In 1789 he had come as surveyor to Churchill and York, penetrating

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

inland as far as Athabasca; but Colen, chief factor of York, did not encourage purely scientific explorations. Thompson quit the English service in disgust, coming down to the Nor'Westers on Lake Superior.

These were the two young men—Fraser, son of the New York loyalist; Thompson, the English surveyor—that the Northwest Company appointed in 1805 to explore the wilderness beyond the Rockies.



CHAPTER XXV

1800-1810

DAVID THOMPSON, THE NOR'WESTER, DASHES FOR THE COLUMBIA—HE EXPLORES EAST KOOTENAY, WEST KOOTENAY, WASHINGTON AND OREGON, BUT FINDS ASTOR'S MEN ON THE FIELD—HOW THE ASTORIANS ARE JOCKEYED OUT OF ASTORIA—FRASER FINDS HIS WAY TO THE SEA BY ANOTHER GREAT RIVER.

LET us follow Thompson first. He had joined the Nor'Westers just when the question of the International Boundary was in dispute between Canada and the United States.

(1) In 1796, lest other Northwest forts were south of the Boundary, he first explored from Lake Superior to Rainy Lake and the Lake of the Woods and Winnipeg River and Winnipeg Lake, advancing as fast as the brigades traveled, running his lines at lightning pace. Then he struck across to Lake Manitoba and the Assiniboine and Qu' Appelle. His first survey practically ran in a circle round the bounds of the modern Manitoba, except on the south.

(2) After wintering on the Assiniboine, he pre-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

pared in the summer of 1797 for exploration south to the Missouri, but his work must pay in coin of the realm to the Company. This was accomplished by Thompson obtaining credit from McDonell of the Assiniboine Department for goods to trade with the Mandanes. With three horses, thirty-eight dogs and several voyageurs, he set out southwest, in mid-winter, 1797. This was long before Henry or Chaboillez of the Assiniboine had sent men from Pembina to the Missouri. The cold was terrific. The winds blew keen as whip lashes, and the journey of three hundred miles lasted a month. To Thompson's amazement, he found Hudson's Bay traders from the Albany Department on the Missouri. They must have come south across Minnesota.

(3) By February of '98, Thompson was back on the Assiniboine, and now to complete the southern survey of Manitoba, he struck east for Red River, and in March up Red River to Pembina where the partner, Charles Chaboillez, happened to be in charge. No doubt it was what Thompson told Chaboillez of the Missouri that induced the Nor'-Westers to go there. Still ascending the Red, Thompson passed Grand Forks—then a cluster of log houses inhabited by traders—and struck eastward through what is now Minnesota to that Red Lake, where Hudson's Bays and Nor'-Westers were

David Thompson

to have such bitter fights. Six miles farther east he made the mistake of thinking he had found the sources of the Mississippi in Turtle Lake. Still pressing eastward, he came to Lake Superior and along the north shore to the Company's headquarters. From 1799 to 1805 he ranges up the South Saskatchewan to that old Bow Fort near Banff; then up the North Saskatchewan all the way from Lesser Slave Lake to Athabasca. This, then, was the man whom the Nor'Westers now appointed to explore the Rockies.

Only two passes across the mountains north of Bow River were known to the fur traders—Peace River Pass and Howse River Pass of the Upper Saskatchewan. It was perfectly natural that Thompson should follow the latter—the trail of his old co-workers in the Hudson's Bay service. Striking up the Saskatchewan from Edmonton in the fall of 1806, by October Thompson was in that wonderful glacier field which has only been thoroughly explored in recent days—where Howse River leads over to a branch of the Blaeberry Creek, with Mt. Hector and Mt. Thompson and Mt. Balfour and the beautiful Bow Lakes on the southeast; and Mt. Bryce, and Mt. Athabasca and Mt. Stutfield and the wonderful Freshfield Glaciers on the northwest. This is one of the largest and most wonderful glacial fields

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

of the world. It is the region where the tourists of Laggan, and Field, and Golden, and Donald strike north up the Pipestone and Bow and Blaeberry Creek—raging torrents all of them, not in the least like creeks, broad as the Upper Hudson, or the Thames at Chelsea, wild as the cataracts of the St. Lawrence. From the Pipestone, or Bow, or Blaeberry, one can pass northeast down to the tributaries of the Saskatchewan. Cloud-capped mountains, whose upland meadows present fields of eternal snow, line each side of the river. Once when I attempted to enter this region by pack horse late in September, we wakened below Mt. Hector to find eight inches of snow on our tent roof, the river swollen to a rolling lake, the valley swamped high as the pack horses' saddles.

Hither came Thompson by a branch of the Saskatchewan, and Howse's River and Howse's Pass to Blaeberry Creek. Dense spruce and hemlock forests covered the mountains to the water's edge. The scream of the eagle perched on some dead tree, the lonely whistle of the hoary marmot—a kind of large rock squirrel—the roar of the waters swelling to a great chorus during mid-day sun, fading to a long-drawn, sibilant hush during the cool of night, the sougling of the winds through the great forests like the tide of a sea—only emphasize the solitude,

David Thompson

the stillness, the utter aloneness of feeling that comes over man amid such wilderness grandeur.

On the Upper Blaeberry, Thompson constructs a rough log raft—safer than canoe, for it will neither sink nor upset—whipsawing two long logs over a dozen spruce rollers. A sapling tree for a pole, packs in a heap in the center on brush boughs to keep them free of damp, and down the Blaeberry whirls the explorer with his Indian guides. Here, the water is clearest crystal from the upland snows. There, it becomes milky with the silt of glaciers grinding over stone beds; and glimpses through the forests reveal the boundless ice fields. By October, snow begins to fall on the uplands. The hoary evergreens become heaped with drifts in huge mushroom-like mounds. The upper snow fields curl over the edges of lofty precipices in great cornices that break and fall with the boom of thunder, setting the avalanches roaring down the mountain flanks, sweeping the slopes clean of forests as if leveled by some giant trowel.

Somewhere between Howse's Pass and the Blaeberry, Thompson had wintered, following his old custom of making the explorations pay by having his men trap and hunt and trade with the Sarcees and Kootenay Indians as he traveled. Advancing in this slow way, it was June of 1807 before he had launched his raft on the Blaeberry. Spring thaw

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

has set the torrents roaring. The river is a swollen flood that sweeps the voyageurs through the forests, past the glaciers, on down to a great river, which Thompson does not recognize but which is the Columbia just where it takes a great bend northward at the modern railway stations of Moberly and Golden.

But the question is—which way to go? The river is flowing north, not south to the sea, as Alexander MacKenzie thought. Thompson does not guess *this is not the river, which MacKenzie saw*. “*May God in His mercy give me to see where the waters of this river flow to the western ocean,*” records Thompson in his journal of June 22nd; but if he goes north, that will lead to a great detour—that much he can guess from what the Indians tell him—the Big Bend of the Columbia. He is facing the Rockies on the east. On the west are the Selkirks. He does not know that after a great circle about the north end of the Selkirks, the Columbia will come down south again through West Kootenay between the Selkirks and the Gold Range. To Thompson, it seems that he will reach the Pacific soonest, where American traders are heading, by ascending the river; so he follows through East Kootenay southward through Windermere Lake and Columbia Lake to the sources of the Columbia east of Nelson Mountain. There,

David Thompson

where the Windermere of to-day exists, he builds a fort with Montour, the Frenchman, in charge—the Upper Kootenay House. Then he discovers that beyond the sources of the Columbia, a short portage of two miles, is another great river flowing south—the Kootenay. The portage he names after the Northwest partner—McGillivray, also the river, which we now know as Kootenay, and which Thompson follows, surveying as he goes, south of the Boundary into what are now known as Idaho and Montana, past what is now the town of Jennings and westerly as far as what is now Bonner's Ferry—the roaring camp of old construction days when the Great Northern Railroad passed this way. Here Thompson is utterly confused, for the Kootenay River turns north to British Columbia again, not west to the Pacific, and he has no time to follow its winding course. His year is up. He must hasten eastward with his report. Leaving the fort well manned, Thompson goes back the way he has come, by Howse Pass down the Saskatchewan to Fort William.

While Thompson is East, the Hudson's Bay Company of Edmonton is not idle. Mr. Howse, who found the pass, follows Thompson's tracks over the mountains and sets hunters ranging the forests of the Big Bend and south to Kootenay Lake.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

When he returns to the mountains in 1808, Thompson joins Henry's brigade coming west from Pembina. It is September when they reach Edmonton, and both companies have by this time built fur posts at Howse's Pass, known as Rocky Mountain House, of which Henry takes charge for the Nor'-Westers. Sixteen days on horseback bring Thompson to the mountains. There horses are exchanged for dogs, and the explorer sleds south through East Kootenay to Kootenay House on Windermere Lake, where provisions and furs are stored. Thompson winters at Windermere. In April of 1809 he sets out for the modern Idaho and Montana and establishes trading posts on the Flathead Lake southeast, and the Pend d'Oreille Lakes southwest, leaving Firman McDonald, the Highlander, as commander of the Flathead Department, with McMillan and Methode and Forcier and a dozen others as traders. He is back in Edmonton by June, 1810—"thank God"—he ejaculates in his diary, and at once proceeds East, where he learns astounding news at Fort William. John Jacob Astor, the New York merchant, who bought Nor'-Westers' furs at Montreal, has organized a Pacific Fur Company, and into its ranks he has lured by promise of partnership, friends of Thompson, such good old Nor'-Westers as John Clarke—"fighting Clarke," he was called—and

David Thompson

Duncan McDougall of the Athabasca, and that Alex. McKay, who had gone to the Pacific with Sir Alexander MacKenzie, and Donald MacKenzie, a relative of Sir Alexander's, and the two Stuarts—David and Robert—kin of the Stuart who was with Simon Fraser on his trip to the sea. These Nor'Westers, who have joined Astor, know the mountain country well, and they have engaged old Nor'West voyageurs as servants. Half the partners are to go round the Horn to the Pacific, half overland from the Missouri to the Columbia. If the Nor'Westers are to capture the transmontane field first, there is not a moment to lose.

Thompson is forthwith dispatched back to the mountains in 1810, given a crew of eighteen or twenty and urged forward to the Pacific; but the Piegans are playing the mischief with the fur trade this year. Though Henry drowns them in whiskey drugged with laudanum at Rocky Mountain House, they infest Howse's Pass and lie in wait at the Big Bend to catch the canoes bringing up the furs from Idaho and to plunder Thompson's goods bound south to Kootenay House. Thompson's voyageurs scatter like lambs before wolves. He retreats under protection of Henry's men back through Howse's Pass to Rocky Mountain House, but he is a hard man to beat. Reach the Pacific before Astor's men he

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

must, Piegans or no Piegans; so he forms his plans. Look at the map! This Kootenay River flowing through Idaho does not lead to the Pacific. It turns north into Kootenay Lake of West Kootenay. The Columbia takes a great circle north. Thompson aims for the Big Bend. He hurries overland by pack horse to the Athabasca River, enters the mountains at the head of the river on December 20, 1810, at once cuts his way through the forest tangle up between Mt. Brown and Mt. Hooker, literally "swims the dogs through snowdrifts, the brute Du Nord beating a dog to death," and finds a new trail to the Columbia—Athabasca Pass! Down on the west side of the Divide flows a river southwest, to the Big Bend of the Columbia. Thompson winters here to build canoes for the spring of 1811, naming the river that gladdens his heart—Canoe River.

Down in Idaho, his men on Flathead Lake and the Pend d'Oreille are panicky with forebodings. Thompson has not come with provisions. Their fur brigade has been driven back. The Piegans are on the ramp, and there are all sorts of wild rumors about white men—Astor's voyageurs, of course—coming through the mountains by way of the Snake Indian's territory to "the rivers of the setting sun."

Up on Canoe River, Thompson and his voyageurs worked feverishly—building canoes, and getting the

David Thompson

fur packs ready against spring. Toward spring, ten men are sent back with the furs; seven are to go on with Thompson down Columbia River for the Pacific. Their names are Bordeaux, Pariel, Coté, Bourland, Gregoire, Charles and Ignace. His men are on the verge of mutiny from starvation, but provisions come through from Henry at Howse's Pass, and when these provisions run out, Thompson's party kill all their horses and dogs for food. Very early in the year, the river is free of ice, for Thompson is in a warmer region than on the plains, and the canoe is launched down the Columbia through the Big Bend—a swollen, rolling, milky tide, past what is now Revelstoke, past Nakusp, through the Upper and Lower Arrow Lakes and what is now known as the Rossland mining region. It is a region of shadowy moss-grown forests, of hazy summer air resinous with the odor of pines, of mountains rising sheer on each side in walls with belts of mist marking the cloud line, the white peaks opal and shimmering and fading in a cloudland.

Each night careful camping ground was chosen ashore with unblocked way to the water in case of Piegan attack. July 3rd, Thompson reached Kettle Falls. For a week he followed the great circular sweep of the Columbia south through what is now Washington. At Spokane River, at Okanogan

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

River, near Walla Walla where the Snake comes in, he heard rumors among the Indians that white men from the East had come to the sea, whether overland or round the world he could not tell, so on Tuesday, July 9th, Thompson judges it wise to preempt other claimants. Near Snake River, "I erected a small pole," he writes, "with a half sheet of paper tied about it, with these words:

"Know hereby, this country is claimed by Great Britain and the N W Company from Canada do hereby intend to erect a factory on this place for the commerce of the country—D. Thompson."

Broader spread the waters, larger the empire rolling away north and south as the river swerved straight west. The river, that he had found up at Blaeberry Creek near Howse's Pass, was sweeping him to the sea. This was the river, Gray, the Boston man, had found, and Alexander MacKenzie had missed when he touched the Fraser. Thompson had now explored it from source to sea, from the Columbia and Windermere Lakes north through East Kootenay, south through West Kootenay, south through Washington, west between Washington and Oregon to the Pacific—a region in all as large as Germany and France and Spain.

But from Walla Walla to the sea was a dangerous

stretch. At the Dalles camped robber Indians to pillage travelers as they portaged overland. Thompson kept sleepless vigil all night and by launching out at dawn before the mountain mists had lifted from the water gave ambushed foes the slip. Came a wash and a ripple in the current. It was the tide. The salt water smell set the explorer's pulses beating. Then the blue line of the ocean washes the horizon of an opening vista like a swimming sky. The voyageurs gave a shout and beat the gun'els of the canoe. A swerve to left—chips floating on the water tell Thompson that Astor's men are already here, and there stands the little palisaded post all raw in its newness with cannons pointing across the river from the fort gates. Precisely at 1 P. M., Monday, July 15, 1811, Thompson arrives at Astoria. The Astor men have beaten in the race to the Pacific. Thompson is just two months too late for the Nor'Westers to claim the mouth of the Columbia.

Then all his old friends of the Athabasca, McDougall and the Stuarts and fighting John Clarke—all his old friends but Alex. McKay, who has been cut to pieces by the Indians in the massacre of "the *Tonquin's* crew," all but McKay and Donald MacKenzie, who has not yet arrived from overland—rush down to welcome him. The Astorians receive the Nor'Westers with open arms. It is good fellow-

ship. It is not good policy. "He had access everywhere," writes Ross, a clerk in the employment of Astor. "He saw and examined everything." He heard how the overland party of Astor's men from the Missouri had not yet come. He probably heard, too, that the crew of the ship *Tonquin* had been massacred, and he was not slow to guess that McDougall, head of Astor's fort, was homesick for his old Northwest comrades.

Thompson remained only a week. McDougall gave him what provisions were necessary for the return voyage, and July 22nd he set out to ascend the Columbia with a party of Astorians bound inland to trade. Bourland, his voyageur, wanted to stay at Astoria, so Thompson traded his services to McDougall for one of Astor's Sandwich Island men. The Astor hunters struck up Okanogan River to trade. Thompson pushed on up the Columbia through the Arrow Lakes at feverish pace, noticing with disgust that the Hudson's Bay man, Howse, was camping hard on his trail, forming trading connections with Sarcees and Piegans and Kootenays. Snow comes early in the mountains. Thompson must succeed in crossing the pass before winter sets in so that the report of what he learned at Astoria can be sent down to Fort William in time for the annual meeting of July, 1812. He pauses only for a

night with Harmon and Henry at Rocky Mountain Pass and curses his stars at more delay caused by the Piegan raiders, who are keeping his men of the Big Bend at East Kootenay cooped up in fear of their lives, but he reaches Edmonton in three months, and is present at the annual meeting of the partners at Fort William in July, 1812.

This is a fateful year. War is waged between the United States and Canada. True soldiers of fortune as the Nor'Westers ever were, they decided to take advantage of that war and capture Astoria. John George McTavish and Alexander Henry of Howse's Pass, with Larocque of the Missouri, are to lead fifty voyageurs overland and down the Columbia to Astoria, there to camp outside the palisades and parley with Duncan McDougall. Old Donald McTavish, as gay an old reprobate as ever graced the fur trade, is to sail with McDonald of Garth, the Highlander of the Crooked Arm, from London on the Northwest ship, the *Isaac Todd*, under convoy of the man-of-war, *Raccoon*, to capture Astoria.

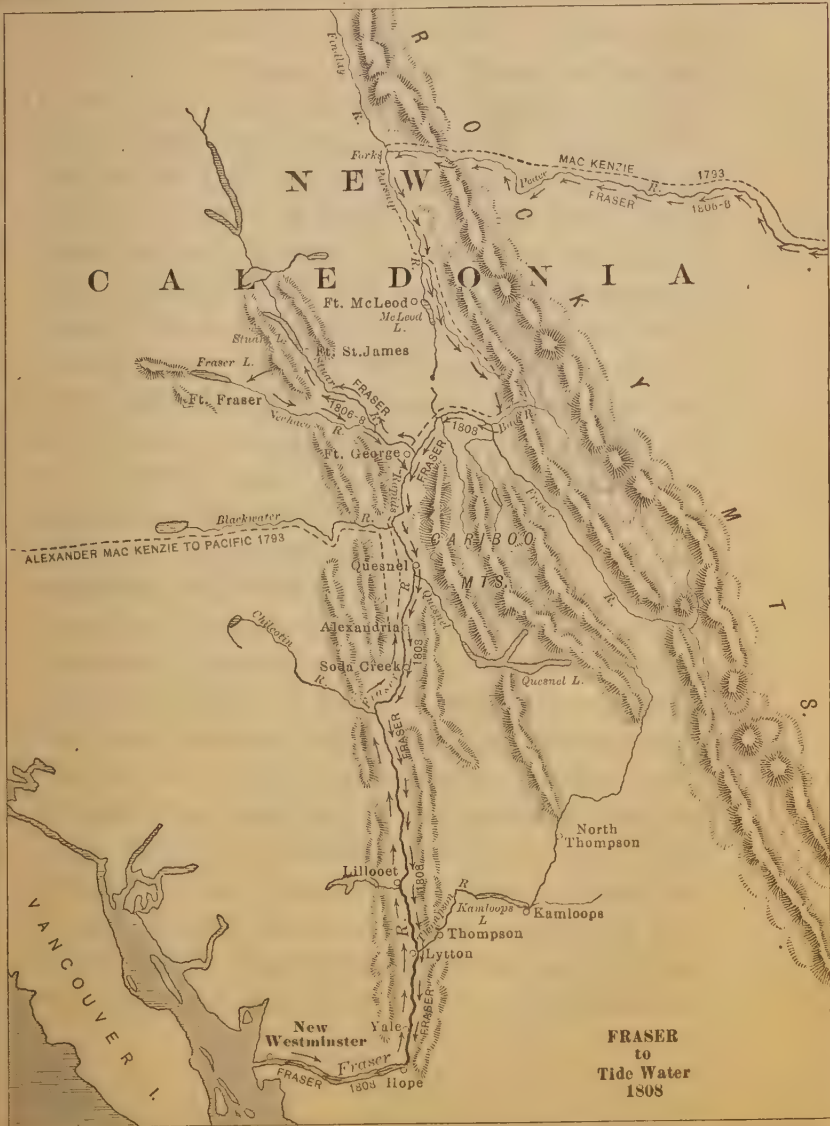
Thompson has fulfilled his mission. Though he was late in reaching the mouth of the Columbia, he has played his fur trade tactics so skillfully that Astoria will fall to his Company's hands. The story of John George McTavish's voyage from Fort William, Lake Superior to Astoria, or of old Donald

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

McTavish's drunken revels round the world in the *Isaac Todd*, would fill a volume. John George McTavish and Larocque reached Astoria first, sweeping gaily down the rain-swollen flood of the Columbia on April 11th in two birch canoes, British flags flying at the prow, voyageurs singing, Indians agape on the shore in sheer amaze at these dare-devil fellows, who flitted back and forward thinking no more of crossing the continent than crossing a river.

Again McDougall welcomed his rivals in trade, his friends of yore, with open arms. Had he trained his cannon on them, they had hardly camped so smugly under his fort walls, nor stalked so surely in and out of his fort, spreading alarm of the war, threatening what the coming ships would do, offering service and partnership to any who would desert Astor's company for the Northwest. McDougall was tired of his service with the Astor company. The *Tonquin* had been lost. No word yet of the second ship that was to come. The fort was demoralized, partly with fear, partly with vice. There had been no strong hand to hold the riotous voyageurs in leash, and loose masters mean loose men. Now with news of a coming war vessel, all the pot valor of the drunken garrison evaporated in cowardly desire to capitulate and avoid bloodshed. The voyageurs were deserting to McTavish. On October

NEW C A L E D O N I A



David Thompson

16, 1813, Duncan McDougall sold out Astor's fort—furs and provisions worth \$100,000—for \$40,000.

Four weeks later, on November 15th, came Alexander Henry and David Thompson to convey the furs overland to Fort William. While the men are packing the furs, at noon, November 30th, "being about half-tide, a large ship appeared, standing in over the bar with all sails spread." Is it friend or enemy; the British man-of-war, *Raccoon*, or Astor's delayed ship? Duncan McDougall goes quakingly out in a small boat to reconnoiter, to pacify the British if it is a man-of-war, to welcome the captain if it is Astor's ship. John George McTavish and Alexander Henry and David Thompson scuttle upstream to hide ninety-two packs of furs and all ammunition and provisions and canoes, but game in his blood like a fighting cock, Henry can't resist stealing back at night to see what is going on. There is singing on the water. A canoe is rocking outrageously. In it is a tipsy man, who shouts the welcome news that the ship was the man-of-war, *Raccoon*, under Captain Black, and that all the gentlemen are gloriously drunk. Thompson and Henry and John George McTavish come downstream to witness, on December 13th, the ceremony of a bottle of wine cracked on the flagstaff, guns roaring from fort and ship, the American flag run down, the British flag

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

run up, and "Astoria" re-named Fort George. From all one can infer from the old journals, the most of the gentlemen remained "intoxicated" during the stay of *The Raccoon*. "Famous fellows for grog," records Henry. *The Raccoon* puts to sea New Year's Day of 1814. David Thompson has long since left for his posts on the Kootenay, and in April, John George McTavish conducts a brigade made up of Astor's men enlisted as Nor'Westers in ten canoes, seventy-six men in all, with the furs for Fort William.

Henry stays on with McDougall awaiting the coming of Donald McTavish on the *Isaac Todd*. The long delayed, storm-battered Northwest ship comes tottering in on April 23rd with Governor Donald McTavish drunk as a lord, accompanied by a barmaid, Jane Barnes, to whose charms the dissipated old man had fallen victim at Portsmouth. Old punk takes fire easiest. What with rum and Jane Barnes to ply it, Astoria was not a pretty place for the next few weeks. Masters and men "gave themselves up to feasting and drinking all the day." Sometimes in his cups, McDougall would forget that he had become a Nor'Wester and rising in his place at the governor's table would hurrah for the Americans till the rafters were ringing. Then Henry would upset table and chairs hiccoughing a challenge to a duel, and the maudlin old governor would

David Thompson

troll off a stave that would turn fighting to singing till daylight came in at the windows revealing the gentlemen asleep on the floor, the servants sodden drunk on the sands outside. In May, the weather clears and my pleasure-loving gentlemen setting such an edifying example to the benighted heathen around Astoria, must enjoy a sail across the flooded Columbia. Five voyageurs rig a small boat. In it step the partners, Donald McTavish and Alexander Henry. A stiff breeze is blowing, and a heavy sea running; but they must have a sail up. The boat tilts to the gun'els. A heavy wave struck her and washed over. She sank at once, carrying all hands down but one voyageur, who was rescued by the Chinooks. Thus perished Donald McTavish and Alexander Henry.

Meanwhile, what had Simon Fraser accomplished in the North, while Thompson was exploring the South? Like Thompson, he, too, was ordered to the mountains in 1805. James McDougall, a Northwest clerk, had already followed MacKenzie's footsteps up Peace River across the mountains to the Forks, when Simon Fraser came on the scene in the fall of 1805. If Nor'Westers are to pass this way to the Western hunting ground, first of all there must be a fort at the entrance to the Pass. Fraser knocks

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

up a cluster of cabins, leaves two clerks and twelve voyageurs in charge and ascends the south fork—the Parsnip. This was the stream where MacKenzie had such tremendous difficulties. Fraser avoids these rapids by going up a western branch of the Parsnip to a little lake narrow and seventeen miles long, set like an emerald among the mountains. There on a point of land beside a purling brook, he built the first fur post west of the Rockies, which he named after the partner, Archibald Norman McLeod. To this day it stands exactly where and as Fraser built it. James McDougall and La Malice, a blackguard half-breed, are left at the fort. Fraser spent three months at the post in the pass, but McDougall goes westward from Fort McLeod to a magnificent lake surrounded by forests and mountains. This lake is the center of the Carrier Indians' country. To an old Shaman or Medicine Man, McDougall presents a piece of red cloth, telling him white men will come to trade in the spring. Blazing initials on the trees, he takes possession of the country for the Northwest Company. Fraser, at Peace River Pass, has sent the furs East and been joined by the wintering partner, Archibald McGillivray, who has come to take charge, while Fraser explores.

Now it must be kept in mind that Fraser, like MacKenzie, thought the great river flowing south

was the Columbia, and setting out from the Pass in May with John Stuart as second in command, Fraser follows the exact trail of MacKenzie—up the Parsnip, down Bad River to the great unknown river. Sweeping south, they come to a large stream coming in from the west—the Nechaco. Will that lead to the Pacific? Fraser ascends it June 11th, only to find that like an endless maze the Nechaco has another branch, the Stuart. They proceed leisurely, hunting along shore, blazing a trail through the forests as the canoes advance, encountering two grizzly bears that pursue the Indian hunter so furiously they flounder over the hunter's wife, who has fallen to the ground flat on her face with fright, tear the man badly and are only driven off by dogs. It is the end of July before the canoes emerge from the second branch on a windy lake, surrounded by mountains with forests to the water's edge—the lake McDougall had found the preceding autumn. Carrier Indians tell the legends yet of their tribe's amazement that July day to see two huge things float out on the water and come galloping—galloping (such is the appearance of rows of paddlers at a distance) across the waves of their lake; but the old Medicine Man dashes out in a small canoe flourishing his red cloth and welcomes the white men ashore. To impress the Carrier Indians, the white men fire a volley that sets

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

echoes rocketing among the peaks; and the Indians fall prostrate with terror. Fraser allays fear with presents, and bartering begins on the spot, for the Carriers are clothed in fine beaver. The white men then clear the ground for a fort. The lake, which McDougall had found the preceding fall and to which Fraser had now ascended, was named Stuart after Fraser's second officer. It was fifty miles long, dotted with islands, broken by beautiful recesses into the forests and mountains. East were the snowy summits of the Rockies, west and north and south, the mighty hills rolling back in endless tiers to the clouds. Fraser names the region New Caledonia and the fort, St. James.

For some reason, salmon were tardy coming to Lake Stuart this year. Fraser's provisions were exhausted and his men were now dependent on wild fruit and chance game. Forty-five miles to the south was another lake also drained by the Nechaco to the great unknown river. To avoid having so many hungry men in one camp, Fraser at the end of August sent Stuart and two men southward to this new lake, which Stuart named in honor of Fraser. Blais remains for the winter with voyageurs at Stuart Lake. Fraser goes on downstream, and where the Stuart joins the Nechaco meets John Stuart and hears so favorably of the new lake that the two pole

back and build on Fraser Lake the third fort west of the Rockies.

The winter of 1806-7 was passed collecting furs at these posts; and the eastern brigade sent to Peace River with the furs carried out a request from Fraser to the partners of Fort William for more men and merchandise for farther exploration. Back with the autumn brigade in answer to his request came Jules Maurice Quesnel and Hugh Faries with orders for Fraser to push down the unknown river to the Pacific at all hazards. Where the Nechaco joined the great river, Fraser in the fall of 1807 built a fourth post—St. George.

Somewhere from the vicinity of this post, at five in the morning toward the end of May, 1808, Fraser launched four canoes downstream for tide water, firmly believing he was on the Columbia. With him went Stuart and Quesnel and nineteen voyageurs. Eighteen miles down came Fort George cañon with a roar of rapids that swirled one canoe against a precipice almost wrecking it; then smooth going till night camp, when all slept with firearms at hand. Next day, the real perils of the voyage began. Canoes were on the water before the mists had rolled up the hills and the river had presently contracted to a violent whirlpool between rock walls—Cottonwood Cañon. Portaging baggage overland, Fraser ran

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the lightened canoes safely down. The river passed on the east was later to be known as Quesnel, famous for its gold fields. At Soda Creek, those natives, who had opposed MacKenzie, suddenly appeared along the banks on horseback, and called to Fraser "that the river below was but a succession of falls and cascades," which no boats could pass. An old chief and a slave joined Fraser as guides and soon enough, the worst predictions were verified. "June 1st, we found the channel contracted to fifty yards, an immense body of water passing through the narrow space forming gulfs and cascades and making a tremendous noise. It was impossible to carry the canoes across land, owing to the steepness of the hills, and it was resolved to venture them," writes Fraser.

"Leaving Mr. Stuart and two men at the lower end of the rapid to watch the natives, I returned to camp and ordered the five best men into a canoe lightly loaded, and in a moment it was under way. Passing the first cascade, she lost her course and was drawn into the eddy where she was whirled about, the men having no power over her. In this manner, she flew from one danger to another till the last cascade but one, where in spite of every effort the whirlpools forced her against a low rock. The men debarked, saving their lives; but to continue would be

certain destruction. Their situation rendered our approach perilous. The bank was high and steep. We had to plunge our daggers into the bank to keep from sliding into the river. We cut steps in the declivity, fastened a line to the front of the canoe, which the men hauled up, others supporting it, our lives hanging on a thread, as one false step would have hurled us all to eternity. We cleared the bank before dark."

The amazed Indians made no motion to molest these mad white men, but tried to explain by signs to Fraser that another great river (the Columbia) led by smooth water to the sea. But Fraser thought he *was* on the Columbia; and "going to the sea by an indirect way was not the object of the undertaking; I therefore continued our route."

Nevertheless, the Indians were right. The river grew worse and worse. Fraser bought four horses from them and went on, half the men along the shore, half in the canoes. The task of bringing the baggage overland "was as difficult as going by water. We were obliged to pass a declivity, the border of a huge precipice, where the loose gravel slid under our feet. One man with a large pack on his back got so entangled on the rocks he could move neither forward nor backward. I crawled out to the edge and saved his life by dropping his load over the precipice

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

into the river. This carrying place, two miles long, shattered our shoes so that our feet were covered with blisters. A pair of shoes" (moccasins) "does not last a day."

The river grew worse and worse. On the 9th of June "the river contracts to forty yards, enclosed by two precipices of immense height narrower above than below. The water rolls down in tumultuous waves with great velocity. It was impossible to carry canoes by land, so all hands without hesitation embarked as it were *a corps perdu* upon the mercy of this awful tide. Once in, the die was cast. Our great difficulty was in keeping the canoes clear of the precipice on one side and the gulfs formed by the waves on the other. Skimming along as fast as lightning the crews, cool and determined, followed each other in awful silence; and when we arrived at the end, we stood gazing at each other in silent congratulation at our escape."

Again the Indians waited at the end of the rapids and again they drew maps on Fraser's oilcloth coverings for baggage, showing which way the river flowed and that canoes could not pass down. The 10th of June, Fraser places his canoes on a shaded scaffolding where the gummed seams will not be melted and hides his baggage in a *cache*. At five A. M. on the 11th, all the crews set out on foot, each

David Thompson

man carrying a pack of eighty pounds. Fraser is now between Lillooet and Thompson River, or where the passing traveler can to-day see the old Caribou trail from Lytton to Ashcroft clinging to the mountain like basketwork stuck on a huge wall. The river becomes calmer, and on the fifteenth Fraser buys a canoe from the Chilcotins, which Stuart and two voyageurs pilot, while the rest of the men walk along the banks.

June 20th, a great river comes in on the east. Knowing that Thompson is somewhere exploring these same mountains to the south, Fraser names the river after his friend of the Kootenay. At the Thompson, all hands once more embark in the canoes. A canoe goes to smash in what is now known as Fraser Cañon, but no lives are lost; so above modern Yale it is deemed safer to portage past the worst places. The portage is almost as dangerous as the rapids, for where the rock is sheer wall, the Indians have made rope ladders across chasms "or hung twigs across poles," the ends fastened from precipice to precipice, and across these swaying gangways the voyageurs had to carry canoe and packs. That night, June 26th, camp was made at Spuzzum.

The river now swerved directly west. Fraser knew where the Columbia turned west was south of

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the Boundary. There was only one conclusion—*this was not the Columbia*. He had been exploring a new river. It was the wildly magnificent stream now called after Fraser.

The coast Indians were always notoriously hostile. The mountain tribes warned Fraser not to go on. Mount Baker loomed south an opal fire, and on the river near what is now New Westminster Fraser saw the ripple of the tide. Where the river divided into two channels, armed Indians pursued in their canoes "singing war songs, beating time with paddles, howling like so many wolves," flourishing spears. A few hours would have carried Fraser to the sea; but these warriors barred the way. He had fulfilled his order. He had followed the unknown river to tide water. On the 3rd of July, Fraser turned back up the river. The coast Indians pursued, pillaging packs when the white men camped, threatening violence when the voyageurs embarked. Two warriors feigned friendship and asked passage in Fraser's canoe. Thinking their presence might afford protection, Fraser took them on board. No sooner was the canoe afloat pursued by a flotilla of Indian warriors than the two struck up a war song. One was caught in the act of stealing a voyageur's dagger. Fraser hurriedly put the traitor ashore; but that night, July 6th, hostile Indians were swarming

like hornets round the camp and every man kept guard with back to tree and musket in hand. The voyageurs became panicky. They were for throwing their provisions to the winds and scattering in the forest. Fraser listened to the mutiny without word of reproach, showed the men how desertion would be certain death and how they might escape by keeping together. Then he shook hands all round, and each voyageur took oath "to perish sooner than forsake the crew." Fear put speed into the paddles. They decamped from that place "singing" to keep the men's spirits up, and the hostiles were left far behind. Fraser had been forty days going downstream. He was only thirty-three going up to Fort George.

In thirty years "the Pedlars"—as the English called the Nor'Westers—had explored from Lake Superior to the Pacific, from the Missouri to the Arctic.

Notes to Chapters XXIII, XXIV, XXV.—Details of the advance up the Saskatchewan are to be found in Alexander Henry's Journals, in Harmon's Journals, and in those fur trade journals of the Masson Collection. Of unpublished data I find the most about the Saskatchewan and Athabasca in Colin Robertson's letters, of which only two copies exist—the original in H. B. C. Archives, a transcript which I made from them.

About Chippewyan—for which there are as many spellings as there are writers—Pond built the first fort thirty miles south of the lake on what he called Elk River; Roderick MacKenzie built the next fort on the south side of the lake. In the 1800's this was abandoned for a post on the north side.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

About Slave Lake—it is named after the Slave Indians, who were called "Slaves," not because they were slaves, but because they had been driven from their territory of the South.

MacKenzie's Voyage, I have told fully in "Pathfinders of the West." The authority for that volume is to be found in MacKenzie's Journals, and in MacKenzie's letter to his cousin, Roderick. Norman McLeod, the clerk under MacKenzie, became the aggressive partner of a later day.

The dates of Thompson's service with the H. B. C. are variously given. I do not find him in H. B. C. books after 1789, and rather suspect that he wintered with Alexander MacKenzie as well as Rory before the former went to the Pacific; but I left this unsaid. It is well to note that Howse did as great service as an explorer as Thompson, but Thompson's services became known to the world. Howse's work passed unnoticed, owing to the policy of secrecy followed by the H. B. C. Father Morice's "History of Northern B. C." traces MacKenzie's course very clearly.

In H. B. C. Archives of 1804 is Duncan McGillivray's letter to the English company proposing division of the hunting field, the H. B. C. to keep the bay, the Nor'Westers to have inland—which was very much like the boy's division of the apple when he offered the other boy the core.

November 16, 1808, Minutes record £800 of stock transferred to Sir Alexander MacKenzie, £742-10—to Earl of Selkirk. This marks as far as I could find the beginning of the end. Selkirk's visit to Canada was in 1803. His observations will be found in his book on "Sketch of the British Fur Trade," 1815, pp. 38-52. The Minutes of H. B. C., 1804, order suit against John Richards, "late commander for the Co'y," for entering H. B. in the month of August in the *Eddystone*, and erecting a fort at "Charlton Island and leaving men with goods for trade."

Details of clashes between 1800 and 1810 will be found in the court records and Canadian Archives.

I have given the explorations of Thompson in great detail because it has never before been done, and it seems to me is very essential to the exploration period of the West. Thompson's MS. is in the Parl. Building, Toronto, Ontario. The Ontario Boundaries Report gives brief account of his Eastern explorations. Henry's Journal, Harmon's Journal, Ross, Cox, Franchere of the Astor expedition give in their journals his movements in the West. Fraser's voyage is to be found in his own MS. Masson Collection. It ought not to be necessary to say here that I know both regions traversed by Thompson well, very well, from personal travel. Nor ought it to be neces-

David Thompson

sary to forewarn that Thompson's Journals do not use the same names as apply to modern regions. To avoid confusion, I have used in every case possible, *only* the modern names. The men who went with Thompson to the Mandane country were—Rene Jussuame, Boisseau, McCracken, Hoole, Gilbert, Mimie, Perrault, Vaudriel. Who the H. B. C. men were who had been on the Missouri before Thompson, I could not find out. Whoever they were, they preceded Lewis and Clarke on the Missouri by ten years. That is worth remembering, when the H. B. C. is accused of being torpid. Thompson never received any recognition whatever for explorations that far exceeded Alexander Mackenzie's. He died unknown in Longueil, opposite Montreal, in 1857.

The H. B. C. Minutes of 1805 record that "Mad McKay" (Donald) cannot procure a man in the Orkneys. They also record that the copper brought by Hearne from the North, was given to the British Museum.

I regret space forbids quoting the Minutes on the Louisiana Boundary.

1808, Peter Fidler is paid £25 bonus, which he surely had won.

Morice says the Indians of Stuart Lake are called "Carriers" from their habit of burning the dead and carrying the ashes.

It may be explained that Mt. Thompson of the Howse Pass region was not named after the explorer, but after a Mr. Thompson of Chicago, who with Mr. Wilcox and Professor Fay and Professor Parker of the U. S. and Mr. Stutfield and Professor Collie and Rev. James Outram, London, explored all this region from 1900 to 1904. I was in the mountains at the time this was done and attempted to go up Bow River, but in those days there was no trail. We were late going up the river and were stopped by the early autumn rains, just beyond Mt. Hector. On a previous occasion, when I was in the mountains, I happened to be delayed at Kootenay Lake for two days. Mr. Mara, who was then president of the Navigation Co., offered me the opportunity to go down on one of his steamers to this very region of Idaho, past the reclamation workers attempting the impossible task of draining the floods of Kootenay Lake. In Thompson's trip from Canoe River, in 1811, to Astoria are some discrepancies I cannot explain, and I beg to state them; otherwise I shall be charged with them. Thompson says he left Canoe River in January. That is a very early date to navigate a mountain river, even though there is no ice. Snow swells the streams to a torrent. Pass that: His journal shows that he did not reach Astoria till July—nearly seven months on a voyage that was usually accomplished in forty or at most sixty

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

days. He may, of course, have been hunting and caching furs on the way, or he may have been exploring east and west as he went on. The reliability of Thompson's Journal is beyond cavil. I merely draw attention to the time taken on this voyage. In the text I "dodge" the difficulty by saying Thompson set out "toward spring." For his exploration, Fraser was offered knighthood, but declined the honor on the plea that it would entail expense that he could not afford.

CHAPTER XXVI

1810-1813

THE COMING OF THE COLONISTS—LORD SELKIRK BUYS CONTROL OF THE H. B. C.—SIMON M'GILLIVRAY AND MACKENZIE PLOT TO DEFEAT HIM—ROBERTSON SAYS "FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE" AND SELKIRK CHOOSES A M'DONELL AGAINST A M'DONELL—THE COLONISTS COME TO RED RIVER—RIOT AND PLOT AND MUTINY.

NOT purely as a fur trader does my lord viscount, Thomas Douglas of Selkirk, begin buying shares in the Company of Honorable Adventurers to Hudson's Bay. Not as a speculator does he lock hands with Sir Alexander MacKenzie, the Nor'West explorer, to buy Hudson's Bay stock, which has fallen from £250 to £50 a share.

To every age its dreamer! Radisson had dreamed of becoming a voyageur to far countries; and his dream was realized in finding the Great Northwest. Iberville's ambition was to be conqueror, and he drenched the New World with the blood that was the price of this ambition; and now comes on the scene the third great actor of Northwest drama, a

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

figure round whom swings the new era, a dreamer of dreams, too, but who cares not a farthing for discovery or conquest, whose dream—marvel of marvels—is neither gain nor glory, but the phantom thing men call—Good!

Born in 1771, Selkirk came to his title in 1779, and in 1807 married the daughter of James Colville, one of the heaviest shareholders in the Hudson's Bay Company. All that life could give the young nobleman possessed, wealth, position, love, power. But he possessed something rarer than these—a realizing sense that in proportion as he was possessed of much, so much was he debtor to humanity.

During his youth great poverty existed in Scotland. Changes in farming methods had driven thousands of humble tenants from the means of a livelihood. Alexander MacKenzie's voyages had keenly interested Selkirk. Here, in Scotland, were multitudes of people destitute for lack of land. There, in the vast regions MacKenzie described, was an empire the size of Europe idle for lack of people.

Young Selkirk's imagination took fire. Here was avenue for that passion to help others, which was the mainspring of his life. He would lead these destitute multitudes of Scotland—Earth's Dispossessed—to this Promised Land of MacKenzie's voyages.

The Coming of the Colonists

The one fact that Selkirk failed to take into consideration was—how the fur traders, how the lust of gain, would regard this aim of his. He addresses a memorial to the British Government on the subject, which the British Government ignores with a stolid ignorance characteristic of all its dealings in colonial affairs. "It appears," says Selkirk, "that the greatest impediment to a colony would be the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly."

Meanwhile he sends eight hundred colonists to Eastern Canada—some to Prince Edward Island, some to Baldoon in Ontario; but neither of these regions satisfies him as does that unseen Eldorado which MacKenzie described. Then he comes to Montreal, himself, where he is the guest of all the ostentatious hospitality that the pompous Nor'Westers can lavish upon him. At every turn, at the Beaver Club banquets, in the magnificent private houses of the Nor'Westers, Selkirk learns for the first time that there is as great wealth in the fur trade as in Spanish mine. Then, he meets Colin Robertson, the young Nor'West clerk, who was dismissed by McDonald of Garth out on the Saskatchewan; and Colin Robertson tells even more marvelous tales than MacKenzie, of a land where there are no forests to be cleared away; where the turning of a plowshare will yield a crop; where cattle and horses

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

can forage as they run; where, Robertson adds enthusiastically, "there will some day be a great empire."

"What part of the great Northwest does Mr. Robertson think best fitted for a colony?" Selkirk asks.

"At the forks of the Red and the Assiniboine," the modern Manitoba, Robertson promptly answers.

Selkirk's imagination leaps forward. Difficulties? Ah, yes, lots of them! The Hudson's Bay Company holds monopoly over all that region. And how are settlers to be sent so far inland? And to whom will they sell their produce two thousand miles from port or town? But where would humanity be if imagination sat down with folded hands before the first blank wall? Selkirk takes no heed of impossibles. He invites Colin Robertson to come back with him to meet the Hudson's Bay Company directors, and he listens to Sir Alexander MacKenzie's big scheme to monopolize all the fur trade by buying up Hudson's Bay stock, and he makes mental note of the fact that if stock can be bought up for a monopoly, it can also be bought up for a colony.

At the table of the Beaver Club dinner sit Sir Alexander MacKenzie and Simon MacGillivray.

"He asks too many questions," says MacGillivray, nodding toward Selkirk's place.

The Coming of the Colonists

"But if we spent £20,000, the North-West Company could buy up a controlling share of H. B. C.," laconically answers Sir Alexander.

"Tush," says the Highlander MacGillivray, resplendent in the plaids of his clan. "Why should *we* spend money for that? We can control the field without buying stock. Only £2,000 of furs did they sell last year; and only two dividends in ten years!"

"If you don't buy control of H. B. C.," says MacKenzie, "take my advice!—beware of that lord!"

"And take my advice—don't buy!" repeats the Highlander.

Selkirk goes back to Scotland. By 1810, he controls £40,000 out of the £105,000 capital of the Hudson's Bay Company. Another £20,000 is owned by minors, with no vote. Practically, Selkirk and his relatives, the Colvilles, own the Company. Sir Alexander's anger knows no bounds. It is common gossip on what we would to-day call "Change" that Selkirk has bought control, not for the sake of the fur trade, but for a colony. Sir Alexander quarrels violently with my Lord Selkirk, whom he regards as an enthusiast gone mad. MacKenzie turns over to MacGillivray, what Hudson's Bay stock he owns and again urges the Nor'Westers to buy on the open market against Selkirk.

Not so does the canny Simon MacGillivray lose

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

his head! To the Hudson's Bay Company he writes proposing a division of territory. If the Hudson's Bay will keep entirely to the bay and the rivers running into the bay, the Nor'Westers will keep exclusively to the inland country and the Athabasca, which is pretty much like playing Hamlet with Hamlet left out, for the best furs are from the inland country and the Athabasca. Among his own partners, MacGillivray throws off all masks. "*This colony of his will cause much expense to us,*" he writes from London on April 9, 1812, to the wintering partners, "*before Selkirk is driven to abandon the project; yet he must be driven to abandon it, for his success would strike at the very existence of our trade.*"

While the lords of finance are fighting for its stock, the old Company is floundering through a slough of distraction not far from bankruptcy. The Bank of England advances £50,000 credit, but the Company can barely pay interest on the advance. Two hundred and fifty servants came home in 1810, and not a recruit can be hired in the Orkneys, so terrible are the tales now current of brutality in the fur country. Corrigan and Russell and McNab came home from Albany with news of the McDonell clan's murderous assaults and of Mowat's forcible abduction to Montreal. All these are voted a bounty of

The Coming of the Colonists

£50 each from the Compnay. Joseph Howse sends home word of his wild wanderings in the Rockies on the trail of David Thompson, and the Company gives him a present of £150 "as encouragement" to hold the regions west of the Rockies. Governor Auld reports that the Canadians have stopped *all trade* west of Churchill. Governor Cook reports the same of York. Governor Thomas reports worse than loss from Albany—his men are daily murdered. They go into the woods and never return.

On Selkirk's advice, the Company calls for Colin Robertson, the dismissed Northwest clerk. For three years Robertson remains in London and Liverpool, advisor to the Company. "If you cannot hire Orkneymen, get Frenchmen from Quebec as the Nor'Westers do," he advises. "Fight fire with fire! Your Orkneymen are too shy, shy of breaking the law in a lawless land, shy of getting their own heads broken! Hire French bullies! I can get you three hundred of them!"

The old Company see-saws—is afraid of such advice, is still more afraid not to take it. They vote to reject "Mr. Robertson's proposals" in January of 1810, and in December of the same year vote a complete turn-about "to accept Mr. Robertson's suggestions," authorizing Maitland, Garden & Auddjo, a legal firm of Montreal, to spend £1,000 a

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

year and as high as £20,000 if necessary, to equip expeditions for the North. William Bachelor Coltman is appointed to look after the Company's clients in Quebec city, and the Hudson's Bay changes its entire system of trade. Barter is to be abolished. Accounts are to be kept. Each year's outfit is to be charged against the factor, and that factor is to have his own standard of money prices. One-half of all net profits goes to the servants—one-sixth to the chief factor, one-sixth to the traveling traders, one-sixth to the general laborers. General superintendents are to have salaries of £400 a year; factors, £150; traders, £100; clerks, £50; and servants are to have in addition to their wages thirty acres of land, ten extra acres for every two years they serve.

It was as if the Governing Committee of London were the heart of a dying body and these proposals the spasmodic efforts to galvanize the outer extremities of the system into life. At this stage Lord Selkirk came into action with a scheme that not only galvanized the languid Company into life, but paralyzed the rival Nor'Westers with its boldness.

After buying control in the Company, Selkirk had laid the charter before the highest legal critics of England. *Was it valid? Did the Company possess exclusive rights to trade, exclusive rights to property, power to levy war?* That was what the charter set



Selkirk

Lord Selkirk, Founder of the First Settlement on Red River, 1812,
from a Photograph in the Ontario Archives.

The Coming of the Colonists

forth. Did the Company possess the rights set forth by the charter? *Yes or no—did they?*”

The highest legal authorities answered unequivocally—Yes: the Company possessed the rights.

It was perfectly natural that legal minds trained in a country, where feudalism is revered next to God, should pronounce the chartered rights of the Hudson's Bay Company valid.

One fact was ignored—the rights given by the charter applied *only to regions not possessed by any other Christian subject*. Before the Hudson's Bay Company had ascended the Saskatchewan, French traders had gone west as far as the Rockies, south as far as the Missouri, and when French power fell, the Nor'Westers as successors to the French had pushed across the Rockies to the Pacific, north as far as the Arctic, south as far as the Snake.

It was perfectly natural that the Nor'Westers should regard the rights of first possession as stronger than any English charter.

Which was right, Nor'Wester, or Hudson's Bay? Little gain to answer that burning question at this late day! From their own view, each was right; and to-day looking back, every person's verdict will be given just and in exact proportion as feudalism or democracy is regarded as the highest tribunal.

All unconscious of the part he was acting in des-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

tiny, thinking only of the fearful needs of Earth's Dispossessed, dreaming only of his beloved colony, Lord Selkirk was pushing feudalism to its supreme test in the New World. Of the nobility, Selkirk was a part of feudalism. He believed the powers conferred by the charter were right in the highest sense of the word, valid in the eyes of the law; and no premonition warned that he was to fall a noble sacrifice to his own beliefs. Where would the world's progress be if the onward movements of the race could be stopped by a victim more or less? Selkirk saw only People Dispossessed in Scotland, Lands Unpeopled in America! The difficulties that lay between, that were to baffle and beat and send him heartbroken to an early grave—Selkirk did not see.

The rights of the Company had been pronounced valid. On February 6, 1811, Lord Selkirk laid his scheme before the Governing Committee. The plan was of such a revolutionary nature, the Committee begs to lay the matter before a General Court of all shareholders. After various adjourned meetings the General Court meets on May 30, 1811. A pin fall could have been heard in the Board Room as the shareholders mustered. Governor William Mainwaring is in the chair. My Lord Selkirk is

The Coming of the Colonists

present. So are all his friends. So are six Nor'-Westers black with anger, among them Sir Alexander MacKenzie, and Edward Ellice, son of the Montreal merchant. Their anger grows deeper when they learn that two of the six Nor'-Westers cannot vote because the ink is not yet dry with which they purchased their Hudson's Bay stock; for shareholders must have held stock six months before they may vote.

In brief, Lord Selkirk's scheme is that the Company grant him a region for colonizing on Red River, in area now known to have been larger than the British Isles, and to have extended south of modern Manitoba to include half Minnesota. In return, Lord Selkirk binds himself to supply the Hudson's Bay Company with two hundred servants a year for ten years—whether over and above that colony or out of that colony is not stated. Their wages are to be paid by the Company. Selkirk guarantees that the colony shall not interfere with the Hudson's Bay fur trade. Other details are given—how the colonists are to reach their country, how much they are to be charged for passage, how much for duty. The main point is my Lord Selkirk owning £40,000 out of £105,000 capital and controlling another £20,000 through his friends—asks for an enormous grant of land larger than the modern province of

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Manitoba—the very region that Colin Robertson had described to him as a seat of empire—the stamping ground of the great fur traders.

Promptly, the Nor'Westers present rise and lay on the table a protest against the grant. The protest sets forth that Lord Selkirk is giving no adequate returns for such an enormous gift—which was very true and might have been added of the entire territory granted the Hudson's Bay Company by Charles II. If it was to the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company to sell such valuable territory, it should have been done by public sale. Then there are no penalties attached to compel Selkirk to form a settlement. Also, the grant gives to the Earl of Selkirk without any adequate return "an immensely valuable landed estate." And, "in event of settlement, colonization is at all times unfavorable to the fur trade." Other reasons the memorialists give, but the main one is the reason they do not give—that if Selkirk owns the central region of the fur country, he may exclude the Nor'Westers.

The protest is tabled and ignored. Sir Alexander MacKenzie is so angry he cannot speak. This does not mean the grand monopoly of the fur trade which he had planned. It means the smashing of the fur trade forever. Ellice, son of the Montreal potentate, sees the wealth of that city crumbling to ruins

The Coming of the Colonists

for the sake of a blind enthusiast's philanthropic scheme.

Some one asks what the Hudson's Bay Company is to receive for their gift in perpetuity to the Earl.

Two hundred servants a year for ten years!

But—interjects a Nor'Wester—Selkirk doesn't pay those servants. That comes out of the Company.

To that, the Company, being Selkirk himself, has no answer.

What will Selkirk, himself, make out of this grant? Then Alexander MacKenzie tells of agents going the rounds of Scotland to gather subscribers at £100 a piece to a joint stock land company of 200 shares. This land company is to send people out to Red River, either as servants to the Hudson's Bay Company, which is to pay them £20 a year in addition to a free grant of one hundred acres, or as bona fide settlers who purchase the land outright at a few pence an acre. The servants will be sent out on free passage. The settlers must pay £10 ship money. It needed no prophet to foretell fortune to the shareholders of the land company by the time settlers enough had come out to increase the value of the grant. This and more, the six Nor'Westers argue at the General Court of the Hudson's Bay Company in the hot debate over Selkirk's scheme. To the Nor'Westers, Selkirk, the dreamer, with his

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

head in the clouds and his vision set on help to the needy and his feet treading roughshod over the privileges of fur traders—to the Nor'Westers this Selkirk is nothing but a land speculator, a stock jobber, gambling for winnings.

But the chairman, Governor Mainwaring, calls the debaters to order. The Selkirk scheme is put to the vote. To a man the Hudson's Bay Company shareholders declare for it. To a man there vote against it all those Nor'Westers who have bought Hudson's Bay stock, except the two whose purchase was made but a week before: £29,937 of stock for Selkirk, £14,823 against him. By a scratch of the pen he has received an empire larger than the British Isles. Selkirk believed that he was lord of this soil as truly as he was proprietor of his Scottish estates, where men were arrested as poachers when they hunted.

"The North-West Company must be compelled to quit my lands," he wrote on March 31, 1816, *"especially my post at the forks. As it will be necessary to use force, I am anxious this should be done under legal warrant."*

"You must give them (the Northwest Company) solemn warning," he writes his agent, *"that the land belongs to the Hudson's Bay Company. After this warning, they should not be allowed to cut any*

The Coming of the Colonists

timber either for building or fuel. What they have cut should be openly and forcibly seized and their buildings destroyed. They should be treated as poachers. We are so fully advised of the unimpeachable validity of these rights of property, there can be no scruple in enforcing them when you have the physical means."

It was the tragic mistake of a magnificent life that Selkirk attempted to graft the feudalism of an old order on the growing democracy of a New World. That his conduct was inspired by the loftiest motives only renders the mistake doubly tragic. Odd trick of destiny! The man who sought to build up a feudal system in the Northwest, was the man who forever destroyed the foundations of feudalism in America.

Let us follow his colonists. Long before the vote had granted Selkirk an empire, Scotland was being scoured for settlers and servants by Colin Robertson. The new colony must have a forceful, aggressive leader on the field. For Governor, Selkirk chose a forest ranger of the Ottawa, who had been an officer in the Revolutionary War of America—Captain Miles MacDonell of the riotous clan, that had waged such murderous warfare for the Nor'Westers in Albany Department. This was fighting fire with fire, with a vengeance—a MacDonell against a MacDonell.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

It was the end of June, in 1811, before the Hudson's Bay ships sheered out from the Thames on their annual voyage. Of the three vessels—*The Prince of Wales*, *The Edward and Anne*, *The Eddystone*—destined to convey the colonists to the Great Northwest—*The Eddystone* was the ship which the Nor'Westers had formerly sent to the bay. Furious gales drove the ships into Yarmouth for shelter, and while he waited, Miles MacDonell spent the time buying up field pieces and brass cannon for the colony. "*I have learned*," he writes to Selkirk, "*that Sir Alexander MacKenzie has pledged himself so opposed to this project that he will try every means in his power to thwart it.*" He might have added that Simon McGillivray, the Nor'Wester, was busy in London in the same sinister conspiracy. Writes McGillivray to his Montreal partners from London on June 1, 1811, that he and Ellice "*will leave no means untried to thwart Selkirk's schemes, and being stockholders of the Hudson's Bay Company we can annoy him and learn his measures in time to guard against them.*"

Soon enough MacDonell learned what form the sinister plot was to take. Colonists enlisted were waiting at Stornoway in the Hebrides. In all were one hundred and twenty-five people, seventy settlers, fifty-nine clerks and laborers, made up of High-

The Coming of the Colonists

landers, Orkneymen, Irish farmers and some Glasgow men. MacDonell was a Catholic. So were many of the Highlanders; and Father Bourke, the Irish priest, comes as chaplain.

The first sign of the Nor'Westers' unseen hand was the circulation of a malicious pamphlet called "The Highlander" among the gathered colonists, describing the country as a Polar region infested with hostile Indians. To counteract the spreading panic, MacDonell ordered all the servants paid in advance. Then, while baggage was being put aboard, the men were allured on shore to spend their wages on a night's spree. MacDonell called on the captain of a man-of-war acting as convoy to seize the servants bodily, but five had escaped.

Next came the customs officer, a relative of Sir Alexander MacKenzie's, called Reid, a dissipated old man, creating bedlam and endless delay examining the colonists' baggage. MacDonell saw clearly that if he was to have any colonists left he must put to sea that very night; but out rows another sham officer of the law, a Captain MacKenzie, to bawl out the Emigration Act from his boat alongside "to know if every man was going of his own free will." Exasperated beyond patience, some of the colonists answered by heaving a nine-pound cannon ball into the captain's rowboat. It knocked a hole

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

through the bottom, and compelled MacKenzie to swim ashore. Back came another rowboat with challenge to a duel for this insult; but the baggage was all on board. By the grace of Heaven, a wind sprang up. At 11 P. M. on the 25th of July, the three Hudson's Bay ships spread their sails to the wind and left in such haste they forgot their convoy, forgot two passengers on land whom Robertson rowed out like mad and put on board, forgot to fire farewell salutes to the harbor master; in fact, sailed with such speed that one colonist, who had lost his courage and wanted to desert, had to spring overboard and swim ashore. Such was the departure of the first colonists for the Great Northwest.

The passage was the longest ever experienced by the Company's ships. Sixty-one days it took for these Pilgrims of the Plains to cross the ocean. Storm succeeded storm. The old fur freighters wallowed in the waves like water-logged tubs, straining to the pounding seas as if the timbers would part, sails flapping to the wind tattered and rotten as the ensigns of pirates. MacDonell was furious that the colonists should have been risked on such old hulks, and recommended the dismissal of all three captains—Hanwell, Ramsey and Turner; but these mariners of the North probably knew their business when they lowered sails and lay rolling to the sea. In vain

The Coming of the Colonists

MacDonell tried to break the monotony of the long voyage, by auctioning the baggage of the deserters, by games and martial drill. One Walker stood forward and told him to his face that "they had not come to fight as soldiers for the Hudson's Bay Company: they had come as free settlers"; besides, he spread the report that the country did not belong to the Hudson's Bay anyway; the country had been found by the French and belonged to the Nor'-Westers. MacDonell probably guessed the rest—the fellow had been primed.

On September the 6th, the ships entered the straits. There was not much ice, but it was high, "like icebergs," MacDonell reported. On September 24th, after a calm passage across the bay, the colonists anchored off York and landed on the point between Hayes and Nelson Rivers. Snow was falling. The thermometer registered eight degrees below zero. No preparations had been made to house the people at the fort. It was impossible to proceed inland, and in the ships' cargoes were provisions for less than three months. Having spent two months on the sea, the colonists were still a year away from their Promised Land.

Nelson and Hayes Rivers—it will be remembered—flow into Hudson Bay with a long, low point of wooded marsh between. York was on Hayes River

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

to the south. It was thought better hunting would be found away from the fort on Nelson River to the north. Hither MacDonell sent his colonists on October 7th, crossing the frozen marsh himself two days later, when he was overtaken by a blinding blizzard and wandered for three hours. On the north side of the river, just opposite that island, where Ben Gillam and Radisson had played their game of bravado, were camped the colonists in tents of leather and sheeting. The high cliff of the river bank sheltered them from the bitter north wind. Housed under thin canvas with biting frost and a howling storm that tore at the tent flaps like a thing of prey, the puny fire in mid-tent sending out poor warmth against such cold—this was a poor home-coming for people dreaming of a Promised Land; but the ships had left for England. There was no turning back. The door that had opened to new opportunity had closed against retreat. Cold or storm, hungry or houseless, type of Pioneers the world over, the colonists must face the future and go on.

By the end of October, MacDonell had his people housed in log cabins under shelter of the river cliff. Moss and clay thatched the roofs. Rough hewn timbers floored the cabins and berths like a ship's were placed in tiers around the four walls. Bedding

The Coming of the Colonists

consisted of buffalo skins and a gray blanket. Indian hunters sold MacDonell meat enough to supply the colonists for the winter; and in spring the people witnessed that wonderful traverse of the caribou—three thousand in a herd—moving eastward for the summer. Meat diet and the depression of homesickness brought the scourge of all winter camps—scurvy; but MacDonell plied the homely remedy of spruce beer and lost not a man from the disease.

Winter was passed deer hunting to lay up stock of provisions for the inland journey. All would have gone well had it not been for the traitors in camp, with minds poisoned by Northwest Company spies. On Christmas day, MacDonell gave his men a feast and on New Year's day the chief factor of York, Mr. Cook, sent across the usual treat. Irish rowdies celebrated the night by trying to break the heads of the Glasgow clerks. Then the discontent instilled by Nor'West agents began to work. If this country did not belong to the Hudson's Bay, why should these men obey MacDonell? On February 12th, one put the matter to the test by flatly refusing to work. MacDonell ordered the fellow confined in a hut. Fourteen of the Glasgow clerks broke into the hut, released the rebel, set fire to the cabin and spent the night in a riotous dance round the blaze. When MacDonell haled the offenders before Mr.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Hillier, a justice of the peace, they contemptuously walked out of the extemporized court. The Governor called on Mr. Auld of Churchill for advice, and learned from him that by a recent parliamentary act known as 43rd Geo. III, all legal disputes of the Indian country could be tried only in Canada. "*If that is so,*" writes the distracted MacDonell, seeing at a glance all the train of ills that were to come when Hudson's Bay matters were to be tried in Canadian courts made up of Northwest partners, "*then adieu to all redress for us, my lord.*"

But Auld and Cook, the two factors, knew a trick to bring mutineers to time. They cut off all supplies. The men might as well have been marooned on a desert island. By the time boats were ready to be launched in June, the rebels were on their knees with contrition. Wisely, MacDonell did not take such unruly spirits along as colonists. He left them at the forts as clerks.

Spring came at last, tardy and cold with blustering winds that jammed the ice at the river mouths and flooded the flats with seas of floating floes. Day after day, week after week, all the month of May, until the 21st of June, the ice float swept past endlessly on the swollen flood. MacDonell ordered the cabins evacuated and baggage taken to Hayes River round the submerged marsh. At York, four large

The Coming of the Colonists

boats—twenty-eight feet long and flat-bottomed—were in readiness to convey the people. While the colonists camped, there came sweeping down the Hayes on June the 29th, in light birch canoes, the spring fur brigade of Saskatchewan, led by Bird and Howse. All rivers were reported free of ice. Mac-Donell marshaled his colonists to return with the brigade.

Father Burke, who was to drum up more colonists at home, the chief factors Auld and Cook, and the Company men watched the launching of the boats the first week of July. Baggage stored, all hands aboard, all craft afloat—the head steersman gives the signal by dipping his pole. The priest waves a God-speed. The colonists signal back their farewell—farewell to the despair of the long winter, farewell to the lonely bay, farewell to the desolate little fort on the verge of this forsaken world! Come what may, they are forward bound, to the New Life in their Promised Land.

If we could all of us see the places along the trail to a Promised Land, few would set out on the quest. The trail that the colonists followed was the path inland that Kelsey had traversed with the Indians a century before, and Hendry gone up in 1754, and Cocking in 1772, up Hayes River to Lake Winnipeg. While the fur brigade made the portages easily with

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

their light canoes, the colonists were hampered by their heavy boats, which had to be rolled along logs where they could not be tracked up rapids. Instead of three weeks to go from York to Lake Winnipeg, it took two months. The end of August, 1812, saw their boats heading up Red River for the Forks, now known as Winnipeg. Instead of rocks and endless cataracts and swamp woods, there opened to view the rolling prairie, russet and mellow in the August sunlight with the leather tepee of wandering Cree dotting the river banks, and where the Assiniboine flowed in from the west—the palisades of the Nor'Westers' fort. MacDonell did not ascend as high as the rival fort. He landed his colonists at that bend in Red River, two miles north of the Assiniboine, where he built his cabins, afterward named Douglas in honor of Selkirk. Painted Indians rode across the prairie to gaze at the spectacle of these "land workers" come not to hunt but to till the soil. No hostility was evinced by the Nor'-Westers, for word of the Northwest Company's policy had not yet come from London to the annual meeting of winterers at Fort William. The Highlanders were delighted to find Scotchmen at Fort Gibraltar who spoke Gaelic like themselves, and the Nor'-Westers willingly sold provisions to help the settlers.

In accordance with Selkirk's instructions, Mac-

The Coming of the Colonists

Donell laid out farm plots of ten acres near the fort, and farm plots of one hundred acres farther down the river at what is now known in memory of the settlers' Scottish home as Kildonan. The farm lots were small so that the colonists could be together in case of danger. The houses of this community were known as the Colony Buildings in distinction from the fort. It was too late to do any farming, so the people spent the winter of 1813 buffalo hunting westward of Pembina.

Meanwhile, Selkirk and Robertson had not been idle. The summer that Miles MacDonell had led his colonists to Red River, twenty more families had arrived on the bay. They had been brought by Selkirk's Irish agent, Owen Keveny. The same plotting and counter-plotting of an enemy with unseen motives marked their passage out as had harassed MacDonell. Barely were the ships at sea when mutineers set the passengers all agog planning to murder officers, seize the ships and cruise the world as pirates; but the colonists betrayed the treachery to the captain. Armed men were placed at the hatches, and the swivel guns wheeled to sweep the decks from stem to stern. The conspirator that first thrust his head above decks received a swashing blow that cut his arm clean from his shoulder, and the plot dissolved in sheer fright. Keveny now

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

ruled with iron hand. Offenders were compelled to run the gauntlet between men lined up on each side armed with stout sticks; and the trickery—if trickery it were by Nor'West spies—to demoralize the colonists ceased for that passage.

Father Burke, waiting to return by these ships, welcomed the colonists ashore at York, and before he sailed for Ireland performed the first formal marriage ceremony in the Northwest. The Catholic priest married two Scotch Presbyterians—an incident typical to all time of that strange New World power, which forever breaks down Old World barriers. The colonists were so few this year, that the majority could be housed in the fort. Some eight or ten risked winter travel and set out for Red River, which they reached in October; but the trip inland so late was perilous. Three men had camped to fish with the Company servants on Lake Winnipeg. Fishing failed. Winter closed the lake to travel. The men went forward on foot along the east shore southward for Red River. Daily as they tramped, their strength dwindled and the cold increased. A chance rabbit, a prairie chicken, moss boiled in water—kept them from starvation, but finally two could journey no farther and lay down on the wind-swept ice to die. The third hurried desperately forward, hoping against hope, doggedly resolved if he must

The Coming of the Colonists

perish to die hard. Suddenly, a tinkling of dog bells broke the winter stillness and the pack trains of Northwest hunters came galloping over the ice. In a twinkling, the overjoyed colonist had signaled them and told his story, and in less time than it takes to relate, the Nor'Westers were off to the rescue. The three starving men were carried to the Northwest fort at Winnipeg River where they were cared for till they regained strength. Then they were given food enough to supply them for the rest of the way to the settlement. Plainly—if the Nor'Westers' opposition to Lord Selkirk's colony had been confined to trickery at the ports of sailing, there would be no tragedy to relate; but the next year witnessed an aggressive change of policy on both sides, which had fatal consequences.

Notes to Chapter XXVI.—The data for this chapter are mainly drawn from H. B. C. papers, minute books and memorials. There are also some very important letters in the Canadian Archives, namely on 1897 Report—State Papers of Lower Canada—letters of Simon MacGillivray; also in 1886 Report, letters of Miles MacDonell to Lord Selkirk on the colony. I had made in the Public Records Office of London exact transcript of all confidential state papers bearing on this era. These also refer to the hostility of MacKenzie and MacGillivray. Donald Gunn who was one of the colonists of 1813, is, of course, the highest authority on the emigration of that year. Three volumes throw sidelights on the events of this and the succeeding chapter, though it must be observed all are partisan statements; namely, "*Narrative of Occurrences on the Indian Country, London, 1817*," which is nothing more or less than a brief for the Nor'Westers; "*Statement Respecting Earl of Selkirk's Settlements*," London, 1817, which is the H. B. C. side of

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the story; and "*Amos' Report of Trials*," London, 1820; also extremely partisan. The scope of this work does not admit of ampler treatment, but in view of the coming centenary of colonization in the West, it should be interesting to know that the heirs of Lord Selkirk have some three thousand letters bearing on this famous colony and its disputes.

I should not need to explain here that the novel, "*Lords of the North*," was not written as history, but as fiction, to portray the most picturesque period in Canadian life, and the story was told as from a Nor'Wester, *not because the author sided with the Nor'Westers in their fight*, but because the Nor'Westers sending their brigades from Montreal to the Pacific afforded the storyteller as a Nor'Wester a broader and more dramatic field than the narrator could have had telling it as a Hudson's Bay partisan. Let me explain why. The only expedition sent from Montreal west by the H. B. C. at that time was a dismal fiasco in a region where the story of the stolen wife did not lead. On the other hand, the N. W. C. canoes that left Montreal in 1815 led directly to the region traversed by the unfortunate captive. Therefore, I told the story as a Nor'Wester and was surprised to receive furious letters of defense from H. B. C. descendants. Apart from this disguise and one or two intentional disguises in names and locale, I may add that every smallest detail is taken from facts on the life at that time. These disguises I used because I did not feel at liberty to flaunt as fiction names of people whose grandchildren are prominent among us to-day; certainly not to flaunt the full details of the captive woman's sufferings when her son has been one of the most distinguished men in Canada.

Robertson's letters—unpublished—contain the most graphic description of the West as a coming empire that I have ever read. There is no mistaking where Selkirk got his inspiration—why he decided to send settlers to Manitoba instead of Ontario. More of Robertson will follow in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII

1813-1820

THE COMING OF THE COLONISTS CONTINUED—MACDONELL ATTEMPTS TO CARRY OUT THE RIGHTS OF FEUDALISM ON RED RIVER—NOR'WESTERS RESENT—THE COLONY DESTROYED AND DISPERSED—SELKIRK TO THE RESCUE—LAJIMONIERE'S LONG VOYAGE—CLARKE IN ATHABASCA.

Y EARLY the Hudson's Bay boats now brought their little quota of settlers for Red River. On June 28, 1813, more than ninety embarked in *The Prince of Wales* at Stromness. Servants and laborers took passage on *The Eddystone*. On the third ship—a small brig—went missionaries to Labrador, Moravian Brethren. More diverse elements could not have made up a colony. There were young girls coming out alone to a lawless land to make homes for aged parents the next year. Sitting disconsolate on all their earthly belongings done up in canvas bags, were an old patriarch and his wife evicted from Scottish home, coming to battle in the wilderness without children's aid. Irish Catholics, staid Scotch Presbyterians, dandified

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Glasgow clerks, rough, gruff, bluff, red-cheeked Orkneymen, younger sons of noble families taking service in the wilds as soldiers of fortune, soft speaking, shy, demure Moravian sisters and brethren—made up the motley throng crowding the decks of the vessels at Stromness.

As the capstan chains were clanking their singing of “anchor up,” there was the sudden confusion of a conscription officer rushing to arrest a young emigrant. He had been the lover of a Highland daughter and had deserted following her to Red River. Then sails were spread to a swelling breeze. While the young girl was still gazing disconsolately over the railing toward the vanishing form of her lover, the shores began to recede, the waters to widen. The farewell figures on the wharf huzzahed. Men and women on deck waved their bonnets—all but the old couple sitting alone on the canvas sacks. Tears blurred their vision when they saw the hills of their native land fade and sink forever on the horizon of the sea.

Two days later, there was a cry of “Sail Ho!” and the little fleet pursued an American privateer towing a British captive. The privateer cuts the tow rope and shows heels to the sea. Darkness falls, and when morning comes neither captive nor captor is in sight. The passage is swift across a remarkably

The Coming of the Colonists

easy sea—good winds, no gales, no plots, no mutinies; and the ships are in the straits of Hudson's Bay by the end of July; but typhus fever has broken out on *The Prince of Wales*. Daily the bodies of the dead are lowered over decks to a watery grave. At the straits the boat with the Moravian missionaries strikes south for Labrador. August 12th, the other ships run up the narrow rock-girt harbor of Churchill, past the stone-walled ruins of the fort destroyed by La Perouse to the new modern fur post.

It is not deemed wise to keep the ill and the well together. The former are given quarters under sheeting tents in the ruins of the old stone fort. The rest go on by land and boat south to York. The forests that used to surround Churchill have been burnt back for twenty miles, and when the fever patients recover, they retreat to the woods for the winter; all but the old couple who winter in the stone fort whose ruins are typical of their own lives. Fine weather favors the settlers' journey south, though this wilderness travel with ridge stones that cut their feet and swamps to mid-waist, gives them a foretaste of the trail leading to their Promised Land. Fifty miles distant from York, they run short of food and must boil nettle leaves; but hunger spurs speed. Next night they are on the shores of

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Nelson River round a huge bonfire kindled to signal York Fort for boats to ferry the Nelson.

April, 1814, the colonists are again united. Those who wintered at Churchill sled down to York. On the way over the snow, Angus McKay's wife gives birth to a child. There are not provisions enough for the other colonists to wait with McKay, but they put up his sheeting tent for him, and bank it warmly with buffalo robes, and give him of their scant stores, and leave the lonely Highlander with musket and a roaring fire, on guard against wolves. What were the thoughts of the woman within the tent only the pioneer heart may guess. June 1st, all the colonists were welcomed to Red River by Miles MacDonell, who gave to each two Indian ponies, one hundred acres, ammunition and firearms. Of implements to till the soil, there is not one. There was no other course but to join the buffalo hunters of Pembina and lay up a supply of meat for the year. Then began a life of wandering and suffering. Those families that could, remained at the Colony Buildings while the men hunted. Those who had neither the money nor the credit to buy provisions, followed hunters afield. The snow was late in falling, but the winter had set in bitterly cold. There was neither canoeing nor sleighing. Over the wind-swept plains trudged the colonists, ill-clad against such cold,

The Coming of the Colonists

camping at nights in the hospitable tepee of wandering Indians or befriended with a chance meal by passing hunters. At Pembina log cabins with sod roofs were knocked up for wintering quarters, and the place was called Fort Daer after one of Selkirk's names. No matter what happened afterward, let it be placed to the everlasting credit of the buffalo hunters; their kindness this winter of 1814-15 saved the settlers from perishing of starvation. Settlers do not make good buffalo runners. The Plain Rangers shared their hunt with the newcomers, loaned them horses, housed men and women, helped to build cabins and provided furs for clothing.

They had arrived in June. The preceding January of 1814, Miles MacDonell had committed the cardinal error of the colony. He was, of course, only carrying out Selkirk's ideas. What the motive was matters little. The best of motives paves the way to the blackest tragedies. Old World feudalism threw down its challenge to New World democracy. Selkirk had ordered that intruders on his vast domain must be treated as poachers, "resisted with physical force if you have the means." Conscientiously, Selkirk believed that he had the same right to exclude hunters from the fenceless prairies as to order poachers from his Scottish estates.

On January 8, 1814, Miles MacDonell, in the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

name of Lord Selkirk, forbade anyone, "the Northwest Company or any persons whatsoever," taking provisions, dried meat, food of any sort by land or water from Assiniboia, except what might be needed for traveling, and this only by license. This meant the stoppage of all hunting in a region as large as the British Isles. It meant more. All the Northwest brigades depended on the buffalo meat of Red River for their food. It meant the crippling of the Northwest Company.

MacDonell averred that he issued the proclamation to prevent starvation. This was nonsense. If he feared starvation, his Hudson's Bay hunters could have killed enough buffalo in three months to support five thousand colonists as the Northwesters supported five thousand men—let alone a sparse settlement of three hundred souls.

The Nor'Westers declared that McDonell had issued the order because he knew the War of 1812 had cut off their Montreal supplies and they were dependent solely on Red River. Proofs seemed to justify the charge, for Peter Fidler, the Hudson's Bay man, writing in his diary on June 21, 1814, bewails "if the Captain (MacDonell) had only persevered, he could have starved them (the Nor'Westers) out."

The Nor'Westers ignored the order with the in-

The Coming of the Colonists

difference of supreme contempt. Not so the Half-breeds and Indians! What meant this taking of their lands by a great Over-lord beyond the seas? Since time immemorial had the Indians wandered free as wind over the plains. Who was this "chief of the land workers," "governor of the gardeners," that he should interdict their hunts?

"You are to enforce these orders wherever you have the physical means," Selkirk instructed Mac-Donell. It will be remembered that the buffalo hunter between Pembina and the Missouri came back to Red River by two trails, (1) west to Pembina, (2) north to Souris. A party of armed Hudson's Bay men led by John Warren came on the Northwest hunters west of Pembina—in American territory—and at bayonet point seized the pemmican stores of those Plain Rangers who had helped the wandering colonists. Then John Spencer with more men ascended the Assiniboine armed with a sheriff's warrant and demanded admittance to the Northwest fort of Souris. Pritchard, the Nor'Wester inside, bolted the gates fast and asked what in thunder such impertinence meant. Spencer passed his warrant in through the wicket. Pritchard called back a very candid and disrespectful opinion of such a warrant, adding if they wanted in, they would have to break in; he would not open. The warrant

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

authorizing Spencer "to break open posts, locks and doors," his men at once hacked down palisades and drew the staples of the iron bolts. Six hundred bags of pemmican were seized and only enough returned to convey the Nor'Westers beyond the limits of Selkirk's domain.

When news of this was carried down to the annual meeting of Nor'Westers at Fort William, in July, 1814, the effect can be more readily guessed than told. Rumors true and untrue filled the air; how Northwest canoes had been held up on the Assiniboine; how cannon had been pointed across Red River to stop the incoming Northwest express; how the colonists refused to embroil themselves in a fur traders' war; how Peter Fidler threatened to flog men who refused to fight. Such news to the haughty Nor'Westers was a fuse to dynamite. "It is the first time the Nor'Westers have ever permitted themselves to be insulted," declares William McGillivray. The fiery partners planned their campaign. At any cost "a decisive blow must be struck." Cuthbert Grant, the Plain Ranger, is to keep his hand on all the buffalo hunters. James Grant of Fond du Lac and Red Lake, Minnesota, is to see to it that the Pillager Indians are staunch to Nor'Westers. Duncan Cameron, who had worked so dauntlessly in Albany region and who had title to the captaincy of

The Coming of the Colonists

a Canadian regiment, was to don his red regimentals, sword and all, and hold the Forks at Red River to win the colonists across to the Nor'Westers. And on the Assiniboine—it is to be a MacDonell against a MacDonell; he of the murderous work in the Albany region with revenge in his heart for the death of his brother at Hudson's Bay hands—Alex MacDonell is to command the river and keep the trail westward open.

"Something serious will take place," writes Alex MacDonell on August 5, 1814. *"Nothing but the complete downfall of the colony will satisfy some by fair or foul means—So here is at them with all my heart and energy."* *"I wish,"* wrote Cameron to Grant of Minnesota, *"that some of your Pilleurs (Pillagers) who are full of mischief and plunder would pay a hostile visit to these sons of gunpowder and riot (the Hudson's Bay). They might make good booty if they went cunningly to work; not that I wish butchery; God forbid."*

Dangerous enough was the mood of the North-westerns returning to their field without adding fuel to flame; but no sooner were they back than Miles MacDonell served them with notices in Lord Selkirk's name, to remove their posts from Assiniboia within six months, otherwise the order ran, *"if after this notice, your buildings are continued, I shall be*

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

under the necessity of razing them to the foundations."

As might have been expected, events came thick and fast. Cameron spoke Gaelic. In six months he had won the confidence of the settlers. Dances were given at the Nor'Westers' fort by Cameron all the winter of 1814-15, the bagpipes skirling reels and jigs dear to the hearts of the colonists, who little dreamed that the motive was *to dance* them out of the colony. The late daylight of the frosty winter mornings would see the pipers Green and Hector MacDonell plying their bagpipes, marching proudly at the head of a line of settlers along the banks of Red River coming home from a wild night of it. If the colonists objected to fighting, Cameron kindly advised, let them bring the brass cannon and muskets from the Colony Buildings across to Fort Gibraltar. Miles MacDonell had no right to compel them to fight, and the colony cannon were actually hauled across in sleighs one night to the Northwest fort. Then weird tales flew from ear to ear of danger from Indian attack. Half-breeds were heard passing the colony cabins at midnight singing their war songs. Mysterious fusillades of musketry broke from the darkness on other nights. Some of the people were so terrified toward summer that they passed the nights sleeping in boats on the river. Others ap-

The Coming of the Colonists

pealed to Cameron for protection. The crafty Nor'Wester offered to convey all, who wished to leave, free of cost and with full supply of provisions, to Eastern Canada. One hundred and forty people went bodily across to the Nor'Westers. Is it any wonder? They had not known one moment of security since coming to this Promised Land. They had looked for peace and found themselves pawns in a desperate game between rival traders. Then Cameron played his trump card. Before the annual brigade set out for Fort William in June of 1815, he sent across a legal warrant to arrest Miles MacDonell for plundering the Nor'Westers' pemmican. MacDonell was desperate. His people were deserting. The warrant, though legal in Canadian courts, had been issued by a justice of the peace, who was a Nor'West partner—Archibald Norman McLeod. For two weeks the Plains Rangers had been hanging on the outskirts of the colony firing desultory shots in an innocent diversion that brought visions of massacre to the terrified people. A chance ball whizzed past the ear of someone in Fort Douglas. MacDonell fired a cannon to clear the marauders from the surrounding brushwood. The effect was instantaneous. A shower of bullets peppered Fort Douglas. One of the fort cannon exploded. In the confusion, whether from the enemy's shots or their

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

own, four or five were wounded, Mr. Warren fatally. The people begged MacDonell to save the colony by giving himself up. On June 21st, the governor surrendered and was taken along with Cameron's brigade and the deserting colonists to Montreal for trial. Needless to tell, he was never tried. Meantime, Cameron had no sooner gone, than the remnant of the colony was surrounded by Cuthbert Grant's Rangers. The people were warned to save themselves by flight. Nightly, cabins and hay ricks blazed to the sky. In terror of their lives, abandoning everything—the people launched out on Red River and fled in blind fright for Lake Winnipeg. The Colony Buildings were burned to the ground. The houses were plundered; the people dispersed. By June 25th, of Selkirk's colony there was not a vestige but the ruined fields and trampled crops. Inside Fort Douglas were only three Hudson's Bay men.

The summer brigade from York usually reached Lake Winnipeg in August. The harried settlers camped along the east shore waiting for help from the North. To their amazement, help came from an opposite direction. One morning in August they were astonished to see a hundred canoes sweep up as if from Canada, flying the Hudson's Bay flag.

The Coming of the Colonists

Signals brought the voyageurs ashore—two hundred Frenchmen led by Selkirk's agent, Colin Robertson, bound from Quebec up the Saskatchewan to Athabasca. Robertson had all along advocated fighting fire with fire; employing French wood-runners instead of timorous Orkneymen, and forcing the proud Nor'Westers to sue for union by invading the richest field of furs—Athabasca, far beyond the limits of Red River. And here was Robertson carrying out his aggressive policy, with "fighting John Clarke" of Astor's old company as second in command. The news he brought restored the faint courage of the people. Lord Selkirk was coming to Red River next year. A new governor had been appointed at £1,000 a year—Robert Semple, a famous traveler, son of a Philadelphia merchant. Semple had embarked for Hudson's Bay a few months after Robertson had sailed to raise recruits in Quebec. With Semple were coming one hundred and sixty more colonists, a Doctor Wilkinson as secretary, and a Lieutenant Holte of the Swedish Marines to command an armed brig that was to patrol Lake Winnipeg and prevent the Nor'Westers entering Assiniboia.

Robertson sent Clarke with the French voyageurs on to Athabasca. Clarke departed boasting he would send every "Nor'Wester out a prisoner to the bay."

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Robertson led the colonists back to the settlement. When Duncan Cameron came triumphantly from the Nor'Westers' annual meeting, he was surprised to find the colony arisen from the ashes of its ruin stronger than ever. The first thing Robertson did was to recapture the arms of the settlement. On October 15th, as Cameron was riding home after dark he felt the bridle of his horse suddenly seized, and peered forward to find himself gazing along the steel barrel of a pistol. A moment later, Hudson's Bay men had jerked him from his horse. He was beaten and dragged a prisoner before Robertson, who coolly told him he was to be held as hostage till all the cannon of the colonists were restored. Twelve Nor'Westers at once restored cannon and muskets to Fort Douglas, and Cameron was allowed to go on parole, breathing fire and vengeance till Governor Semple came.

Semple with one hundred and sixty colonists and some one hundred Hudson's Bay men arrived at Kildonan on November 3rd. Robertson was deeply disappointed in the new governor. A man of iron hand and relentless action was needed. Semple was gentle, scholarly, courteous, temporizing—a man of peace, not war. He would show them, he forewarned Nor'Westers, whether Selkirk could enforce his rights. Forewarned is forearmed. The Nor'-

The Coming of the Colonists

Westers rallied their Plain Rangers to the Assiniboine and Red River. "Beware," "look out for yourselves," the friendly Indians daily warned. "Listen, white men! The Nor'Westers are arming the Bois Brulés!" To these admonitions Semple's answer was formal notice that if the Nor'Westers harmed the colonists "the consequences would be terrible to themselves; a shock that would be heard from Montreal to Athabasca." Robertson raged inwardly. Well he knew from long service with the Nor'Westers that such pen and ink drivel was not the kind of warfare to appall those fighters.

Across the river in what is now St. Boniface, there lived in a little sod-thatched hut, J. Ba'tiste Lajimoniere and his wife, Marie Gaboury. Robertson sent for Ba'tiste. Would the voyageur act as scout? "But Marie," interjects Ba'tiste. "Oh, that's all right," Robertson assures him. "Marie and the children will be given a house inside Fort Douglas." "*Bon!* Ba'tiste will go. Where is it? And what is it?" "It is to carry secret letters to Lord Selkirk in Montreal. Selkirk will have heard that the colony was scattered. He must be told that the people have been gathered back. Above all, he must be told of these terrible threats about the Plain Rangers arming for next year. "But pause, Ba'tiste! It is now November. It is twenty-eight hun-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

dred miles to Montreal by the trail you must follow, for you must *not* go by the Nor'Westers trail. They will lie in wait to assassinate you all the way from Red River to St. Lawrence. You must go south through Minnesota to the Sault; then south along the American shore of Lake Huron to Detroit, and from Detroit to Montreal."

Ba'tiste thinks twice. Of all his wild hunts, this is the wildest, for he is to be the hunted, not the hunter. But leaving Marie and the children in the fort, he sets out. At Pembina, two of his old hunter friends—Belland and Parisien—accompany him in a cart, but at Red Lake there is such a heavy fall of snow, the horse is only a hindrance. Taking only blankets, provisions on their backs, guns and hatchets, Ba'tiste and his friends pushed forward on foot with an Indian called Monkman. They keep their course by following the shores of Lake Superior—doubly careful now, for they are nearing Fort William. Provisions run out. One of the friends slips through the woods to buy food at the fort, but he cannot get it without explaining where he is going. As they hide near the fort, a dog comes out. Good! Ba'tiste makes short work of that dog; and they hurry forward with a supply of fresh meat, shortening the way by cutting across the ice of the lake. But this is dangerous traveling. Once the ice began to

The Coming of the Colonists

heave under their feet and a broad crevice of water opened to the fore.

"Back!" called Lajimoniere; but when they turned they found that the ice had broken afloat from the shore.

"Jump, or we are lost," yelled the scout clearing the breach in a desperate leap. Belland followed and alighted safely, but Parisien and Monkman lost their nerve and plunged in ice-cold water. Lajimoniere rescued them both, and they pressed on. For six days they marched, with no food but rock moss—*tripe de roche*—boiled in water. At length they could travel no farther. The Indian's famine-pinched face struck fear to their hearts that he might slay them at night for food, and giving him money, they bade him find his way to an Indian camp. To their delight, he soon returned with a supply of frozen fish. This lasted them to the Sault. From Sault Ste. Marie, Lajimoniere proceeded alone by way of Detroit to Montreal. Arriving the day before Christmas, he presented himself at the door of the house where Selkirk was guest. The servant asked his message.

"Letters for Lord Selkirk."

"Give them to me. I will deliver them."

"No Sir! I have come six hundred leagues to deliver these letters into Selkirk's hands and into

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

no other hands do they go. Go tell Lord Selkirk a voyageur from the West is here.”

Bad news were these threats against the colonists to my Lord Selkirk. He told Lajimoniere to rest in Montreal till letters were ready. Then he appealed to the governor of Quebec, Sir Gordon Drummond, for a military detachment to protect Red River, but Sir Gordon Drummond asked advice of his Council, and the McGillivrays of the Northwest Company were of his Council; and there followed months of red tape in which Selkirk could gain no satisfaction. Finally in March, 1816, he received commission as a justice of the peace in the Indian country and permission to take for his personal protection a military escort to be provisioned and paid at his own cost. Canada was full of regiments disbanded from the Napoleon wars and 1812. Selkirk engaged two hundred of the De Meuron and De Watteville regiments to accompany him to Red River. Then he dispatched Lajimoniere with word that he was coming to the colonists' aid.

But the Nor'Westers were on the watch for Lajimoniere this time. One hundred strong, they had arranged their own brigade should go west from Fort William this year. It was to be a race between Selkirk and the Nor'Westers. Lajimoniere must be intercepted. “*Lajimoniere is again to pass through*

The Coming of the Colonists

your Department, on his way to Red River," wrote Norman McLeod to the partners in Minnesota. "He must absolutely be prevented. He and the men along with him, and an Indian guide he has, must all be sent to Fort William. It is a matter of astonishment how he could have made his way last fall through your Department."

Rewards of \$100, two kegs of rum and two carrots of tobacco, were offered to Minnesota Indians if they would catch Lajimoniere. They waylaid his canoe at Fond du Lac, beat him senseless, stole his dispatches, and carried him to Fort William where he was thrown in the butter vat prison and told that his wife had already been murdered on Red River.

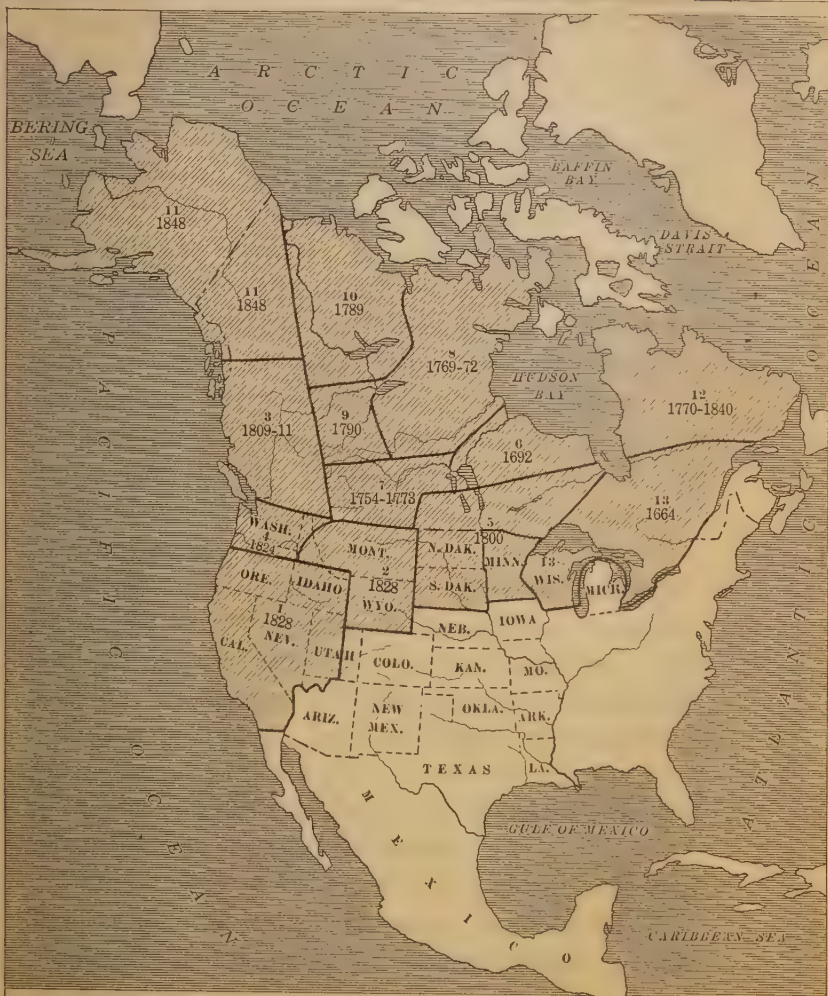
Out on Red River, Colin Robertson was doing his best to stem the tide of disaster. During the winter of 1815-16, Semple was continuing the fatuous policy of seizing all the supplies of Northwest pemmican, and had gone on a tour to the different fur posts in Selkirk's territory. For reasons that are now known, no word had come from Selkirk. Toward March arrived an Indian from the upper Assiniboine, whom a Hudson's Bay doctor had cured of disease, and who now in gratitude revealed to Robertson that a storm was gathering on both sides likely to break on the heads of the colonists. Alex Mc-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Donell of the Assiniboine was rallying the Bois Brulés to meet the spring brigade from Montreal, and the spring brigade was to consist of nearly every partner in the Northwest Company, with eighty fighting men. "Look out for yourselves," warned the Indian. "They are after the heads of the colony. They are saying if they catch Robertson they will skin him alive and feed him to the dogs for attacking Cameron last fall."

Old Chief Peguis comes again and again with offers to defend the colonists by having his tribe heave "the war hatchet," but Robertson has no notion of playing war with Indians. "Beware, white woman, beware!" the old chief tells Marie Gaboury. "If the Bois Brulés fight, come you and your children to my tepee."

Robertson did not wait for the storm to break. Taking half a dozen men with him on March 13, 1816, he marched across to Fort Gibraltar to seize Cameron as hostage. It was night. The light of a candle guided them straight to the room where the Northwest partner sat pen in hand over a letter. Bursting into the room, Robertson who was of a large and powerful frame, caught Cameron by the collar. Two others placed pistols at the Nor'-Wester's head. There lay the most damning evidence beneath Cameron's hand—the letter asking



Map showing roughly what regions The Fur Traders Explored.

- | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------|
| 1- Explored by Ogden 1824-38. | 5- Explored by H. B. Co. via Albany River before 1800. | 8- Explored by Hearne 1769-73. |
| 2- " " Ross 1824-38. | 6- Explored by Kelsey from Nelson River 1692. | 9- " " Joseph Howse. |
| 3- " " Thompson 1809-11; Fraser 1808; Anderson 1848. | 7- Explored by Hendry & Cocking 1754-72. | 10- " " Alexander MacKenzie |
| 4- Explored by Astor's Men 1811-14. | | 11- " " Campell, Felly, Murray. |
| | | 12- " " Coats & McLean. |
| | | 13- " " Radisson 1664. |

The Coming of the Colonists

Grant of Minnesota to rally the Pillager Indians against Fort Douglas. Cameron was taken prisoner and when Semple returned, he was sent down in May to Hudson's Bay to be forwarded to England for trial. Ice jam in the straits delayed him a whole year at Moose; and when he was taken to England, Cameron, the Nor'Wester, was no more brought to trial by the Hudson's Bay Company than MacDonell, the Hudson's Bay man, was brought to trial by the Nor'Westers. I confess at this stage of the game, I can see very little difference in the faults on both sides. Both sides were playing a desperate, ruthless, utterly lawless game. Both had advanced too far for retreat. Even Selkirk was involved in the meshes with his two hundred soldiers tricked out as a bodyguard.

Semple and Robertson now quarreled outright. Robertson was for striking the blow before it was too late; Semple for temporizing, waiting for word from Selkirk. Robertson was for calling all the settlers inside the palisades. Semple could not believe there was danger.

"Then I wash my hands of consequences and leave this fort," vowed Robertson.

"Then wash your hands and leave," retorted Semple, and Robertson followed Cameron down to Moose, to be ice-bound for nearly a year. Semple

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

continued his mad policy of enforcing English poaching laws on Red River. Gibraltar was dismantled and the timber rafted down to Fort Douglas.

Up in the North, Robertson's Athabasca brigade, under fighting John Clarke, had come to dire disaster. Clarke felt so cock-sure that his big brigade could humble the Nor'Westers into suing for union with the Hudson's Bay that he had galloped his canoes up the Saskatchewan, never pausing to gather store of pemmican meat. A third of the men were stationed at Athabasca Lake, a third sent down the MacKenzie to Slave Lake, a third, Clarke, himself, led up the Peace to the mountains. On the way, the inevitable happened. Clarke ran out of provisions and set himself to obtain them by storming the Nor'Wester, McIntosh, at Fort Vermilion. McIntosh let loose his famous Northwest bullies, who beat Clarke off and chased him down the Peace to Athabasca. Archibald MacGillivray and Black were the partners at Chippewyan, and many a trick they played to outwit Clarke during the long winters of 1815-16. Far or near, not an Indian could Clarke find to barter furs or provisions. The natives had been frightened and bribed to keep away. Once, the coureur brought word that a northern tribe was coming down with furs. The Nor'Westers gave a grand ball to their rivals of the Hudson's Bay, but

The Coming of the Colonists

at midnight when revels were at their height, a Northwest dog train without any bells to sound alarm, sped silently over the snow. The Indian hunters were met and the furs obtained before the Hudson's Bay had left the dance. Another night, a party of Hudson's Bay men had gone out to meet Indians approaching with provisions. Suddenly, Nor'Westers appeared at the night campfire with whiskey. The Hudson's Bay men were deluded into taking whiskey enough to disable them. Then they were strapped in their own sleighs and the dogs headed home.

Clarke was almost at the end of his tether when the Nor'Westers invited him to a dinner. When he rose to go home, MacGillivray and Black slapped him on the shoulder and calmly told him he was their prisoner. As for his men, eighteen died outright of starvation. Others were forced at bayonet point or flogged into joining the Nor'Westers. Many scattered to the wilderness and never returned. Of the two hundred Hudson's Bay voyageurs who had gone so gloriously to capture Athabasca, only a pitiable remnant found their way down to the Saskatchewan and Lake Winnipeg. Clarke obtains not one pack of furs. The Nor'Westers send out four hundred.

Notes to Chapter XXVII.—The data for this chapter have been drawn from the same sources as the preceding chapter.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

In addition, I took the cardinal facts from two other sources hitherto untold; (1) from Colin Robertson's confidential letters to Selkirk; (2) from Coltman's report to the Canadian Government and Sherbooke's confidential report to the British Government—all in manuscript. In addition there are the printed Government Reports (including Coltman's) and Trials and Archives, but I find in these public reports much has been suppressed, which the confidential records reveal. I am again indebted to Abbé Dugas for the legend of Lajimoniere's trip East. Events thicken so fast at this stage of the H. B. C. and N. W. C. fight, space does not permit record of all the bloody affrays, such for instance as the killing of Slater, the H. B. C. man, at Abbittibbi, the death of Johnstone at Isle a la Crosse, or the violence there when Peter Skene Ogden drove the Indians from the H. B. C.

The name of the armed schooner, which was to patrol Lake Winnipeg to drive the Nor' Westers off, Coltman gives as *Cathul-in*, and a personal letter of Lieut. Holte (H. B. C.) declares that he was to be commander.

MacDonell's proclamations seem to have been feudalism run mad. In July of 1814, he actually forbade natives to bark trees for canoes and wigwams, or to cut large wood for camp fires. Then followed his notices ordering the N. W. C. to move their forts.

Howse, the explorer, was at this time in charge of Isle a la Crosse.

The H. B. C. colonists, who sided with Cameron and carried across to the N. W. C. the four brass cannon, four swivels, one howitzer—were George Bannerman, Angus Gunn, Hugh Bannerman, Donald McKinnon, Donald McDonald, George Campbell. Robert Gunn, John Cooper, Angus McKay, Andrew McBeth and John Matheson opposed giving the arms to Cameron and were loyal to Selkirk.

Peter Fidler's Journal (manuscript) gives details of 1815 at Fort Douglas.

When the colony was dispersed in June, 1815, it consisted of thirteen men and their families—forty persons. The N. W. C. took no part in the flight of the colonists to Lake Winnipeg. It was the Half-breeds who ordered them to leave Red River.

The Colony Buildings burnt were four houses grouped as the fort, five farm houses, barns, stables, a mill and eighteen settlers' cabins. This was not done by order of the N. W. C. but by the Plains Rangers.

The Coming of the Colonists

It appeared in N. W. C. records that as high as £100 was paid some of the colonists to desert Red River.

Selkirk's letter to Robertson, which the N. W. C. captured from Lajimoniere, ran thus: "*There can be no doubt that the N. W. C. must be compelled to quit . . . my lands . . . especially at the Forks . . . but as it will be necessary to use force, I am anxious this should be done under legal warrant.*" I cannot see much difference between Selkirk bringing up De Meurons to drive the N. W. C. off, and Cameron calling on the Indians to drive the H. B. C. off.

May 18th, Cameron was sent to the bay. June 11th, Robertson quarreled with Semple and followed. June 10th, Semple had ordered the dismantling of Gibraltar, which was completed after Robertson left.

Letters from McIntosh of Peace River give details of Clarke's disaster in Athabasca, describing his men "as starving like church rats and so reduced they were not able to stand on their feet, and were a picture of the resurrection."

Some authorities, like McDonald of Garth, give the number of Voyageurs sent to Athabasca by Robertson as four hundred. I follow Robertson's MS. account.

It is not surprising that one of the first settlers to desert Red River for Ontario was that Angus McKay, whose child was born on the sled journey to York.

CHAPTER XXVIII

1816-1820

THE COMING OF THE COLONISTS CONTINUED—GOVERNOR SEMPLE AND TWENTY COLONISTS ARE BUTCHERED AT SEVEN OAKS—SELKIRK TO THE RESCUE CAPTURES FORT WILLIAM AND SWEEPS THE NOR'WESTERS FROM THE FIELD—THE SUFFERING OF THE SETTLERS—AT LAST SELKIRK SEES THE PROMISED LAND AT RED RIVER.

HERE, then, is the position, June 17, 1816. My Lord Selkirk is racing westward from Montreal to the rescue of his Red River colonists with two hundred men made up of disbanded De Meuron and De Watteville soldiers and French canoemen.

William McGillivray has gathered all the Eastern partners of the Northwest Company together—McLoughlin, the doctor; Simon Fraser, the explorer; McLeod, the justice of the Peace; Haldane, McLellan, McGillis, Keith and the rest—and with a hundred armed men and two cannon, is dashing for Red River to outrace Selkirk, rescue Duncan Cameron, restore Fort Gibraltar, and prevent the forcible eviction of the Northwest Company from Assiniboia.

The Coming of the Colonists

Selkirk goes by way of Lake Ontario and the modern Simcoe. The Nor'Westers follow the old trail up the Ottawa.

In the West, blacker gathers the storm. Deprived of their pemmican by Semple's raids, the Nor'-Westers rally their Plain Rangers under Cuthbert Grant to Alexander McDonell of Qu' Appelle, determined to sweep down the Assiniboine and meet the up-coming express from Montreal at all hazards. This will prevent Semple capturing those provisions, too. Incidentally, the Plain Rangers intended to rescue Cameron from the Hudson's Bay men. They do not know he has been sent to the bay. Incidentally, too, they intend "*to catch Robertson and skin him and feed him to the dogs.*" They do not know that he, too, has gone off in a huff to the bay. Gibraltar is to be restored. They do not know that it has been dismantled. Then, when the Nor'West partners come from the East, the Hudson's Bay people are to be given a taste of their own medicine. No attack is planned. The Plain Rangers are to keep away from Fort Douglas; but the English company is to be starved out, and if there is resistance—then, in the language of Alex McDonell, mad with the lust of revenge for the death of Eneas—"the ground is to be drenched with the blood of the colonists."

In Fort Douglas sits Robert Semple, Governor of

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the Colony, his cannon pointed across Red River to stop all trespassers on Selkirk's domain.

One other chessman there is in the desperate game. Miles MacDonell, the captured governor of Red River, has been released at Montreal and is speeding westward in a light canoe with good cheer to the colonists—word of Selkirk's coming.

Red River is the storm center. Toward it converge three different currents of violence: the Plain Rangers from the West; Selkirk's soldiers, and the Nor'Westers' men from the East. What is it all about? Just this—shall or shall not the feudal system prevail in the Great Northwest? Little cared the contestants about the feudal system. They were fighting for profits in terms of coin. They were pawns on the chess board of Destiny.

Comes once more warning to the blinded Semple, secure in his beliefs as if entrenched in the castle of a feudal baron. A chance hunter paddles down the Assiniboine to Red River. "My governor! My governor!" the rough fellow pleads. "Are you not afraid? The Half-breeds are gathering! They are advancing! They will kill you!"

"Tush, my good man," laughs Semple, "I'll show them papers proving that we own the country."

"*Own* the country? What does *that* mean?"

The Coming of the Colonists

The freeman shakes his head. No man owns these boundless plains.

Comes again Moustache Batino, whom Doctor White had healed of a wound.

"A hundred and fifty Bois Brulés (Burnt Wood Runners) are at the Portage of the Prairie! They will be here by to-morrow night."

"Well, what of it? Let 'em come," smiles Semple.

The Indian ruminates—Is this Englishman mad?

"Mad! Nonsense," says Semple to his secretary, Wilkinson. "They will never be such fools as to break the law when they know we have right on our side."

But old Chief Peguis of the Sauteurs knows nothing at all about that word "law." June 18th, at night when the late sunset is dyeing the Western prairies blood red, Peguis knocks at the fort gates.

"Governor of the gard'ners and land workers," he declares, "listen to me—listen to me, white man! Let me bring my warriors to protect you! The Half-breeds will be here to-morrow night. Have your colonists sleep inside the fort."

Semple grows impatient. "Chief," he declares, "mark my words! There is not going to be any fighting."

All the same Peguis goes to Marie Gaboury,

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Lajimoniere's wife. "White woman," he commands, "come you across the river to my tepee! Blood is to be shed."

And Marie Gaboury, who has learned to love the Indians as she formerly feared them, follows Chief Peguis down the river bank with her brood of children, like so many chickens.

Such is her fright as she ensconces the children in the chief's canoe, that she faints and falls backward, upsetting the boatload, which Peguis rescues like so many drowned ducklings, but Lajimoniere's family hides in the Pagan tent while the storm breaks.

On the evening of June 19th, the boy on watch in the gate tower calls out, "the Half-breeds are coming." Semple goes up to the watchtower with a spyglass. So do Heden, the blacksmith; and Wilkinson, the secretary; and White, the doctor; and Holte, the young lieutenant of the Swedish Marines; and John Pritchard, who has left the Nor'-Westers and joined the colony; and Bourke, the storekeeper.

"Those certainly are Half-breeds," says Pritchard, pointing to a line of seventy or a hundred horsemen coming from the west across the swamps of Frog Plain beyond Fort Douglas toward the colony.

"Let twenty men instantly follow me," commands

The Coming of the Colonists

Semple. "We'll go out and see what those people want."

Bayonets, pistols, swords are picked up in confusion, and out sallies a little band of twenty-seven men on foot.

The Half-breeds are not approaching Fort Douglas. They are advancing toward the colony. Half a mile out, Semple meets the colonists rushing for the fort in a wild panic. Alex McBeth, a colonist who had been a soldier, calls out, "Keep your back to the river, Governor! They are painted! Don't let them surround you."

"There is no occasion for alarm! I am only going to speak to them," answers Semple, marching on, knee-deep through the hay fields. All the same, he sends a boy back with word for Bourke, the storekeeper, and McLean, the farmer, to hitch horses and drag out the cannon. As the Half-breeds approach Semple sees for himself they are daubed in war paint and galloping forward in a semi-circle. Young Holte of the Marines becomes so flustered that he lets his gun off by mistake, which gives the Governor a start.

"Mind yourself," Semple orders. "I want no firing at all."

"My God, Governor! We are all lost men," mutters Heden, the blacksmith; and Kilkenny, a fighting

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Irishman, begs, "Give me leave, Governor! Let me shoot; or we shall all be shot. There's Grant, the leader. Let me pick off Grant!"

"No firing, I tell you," orders Semple angrily, and the two parties come in violent collision on a little knoll of wooded ground called Seven Oaks.

With Grant are our old friends of the Saskatchewan—Falçon, the rhyming poet; and Boucher, son of the scout shot on the South Saskatchewan; and Louis Primo, old reprobate who had deserted Cocking fifty years ago; and two of Marguerite Trottier's brothers from Pembina; and a blackguard family of Deschamps from the Missouri; and seventy other Plain Rangers from the West.

Followed by a bloodthirsty crew hard to hold, Cuthbert Grant was appalled to see Semple march out courting disaster.

"Go tell those people to ground their arms and surrender," he ordered Boucher.

"What do you want?" demanded Semple as Boucher galloped up.

"Our fort," yelled Boucher forgetting his message.

"Then go to your fort!" vehemently ordered Semple.

"Rascal! You have destroyed our fort," roared the angry Half-breed.

The Coming of the Colonists

"Dare you address me so?" retorted Semple, seizing the scout's gun. "Men—take him prisoner!"

"Have a care you do me no ill," shouted Boucher slipping off the other side of his horse, prancing back.

"Take him prisoner—I say! Is this a time to be afraid?" shouts Semple.

"My God! We are all dead men," groans Sutherland, the Scotch colonist, for the dread war whoop had rent the air. There was a blaze of musketry, and there reeled back with his arms thrown up—young Holte, the officer who had boasted that with the Lake Winnipeg schooner "he would give the Northwest scoundrels a drubbing." Another crash, and Semple is down with a broken thigh. Cuthbert Grant dismounts and rushes to stop the massacre. "I am not mortally wounded! Take me to the fort," gasps Semple. Grant turns to call aid. The Deschamps stab the Governor to death on the spot. The firing lasts less than fifteen minutes, but twenty of the Hudson's Bay men have fallen, including all the officers, four colonists, fifteen servants. Captain Rodgers is advancing to surrender when he is hacked down. Of the twenty-seven who followed out, Pritchard, the former Nor'Wester, is saved by surrender; and five men escape by swimming across the river. As for the cannon, Bourke is trundling

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

it back as fast as the horses can gallop. McLean, the settler, has been slain. One, only, of the Plain Rangers, Batoche, has been killed; only one wounded—Trottier of Pembina; and Cuthbert Grant at last succeeds in stopping the infuriated rabble's advance and drawing off to camp west of Seven Oaks.

No need to describe the blackness of the work that night on the prairie. The Half-breeds wreaked their pent-up vengeance on the bodies of the slain. Let it be said to the credit of the Nor'Westers, they had no part in this ghoulish work. The worst miscreants were the Deschamps of the Missouri, whose blood-stained hands no decent Indian would ever touch after that night. In camp, Pierre Falçon, the rhymster, was chanting the glories of the victory, and Pritchard was pleading with Grant for the lives of the women and children. For years afterward—yes, even to this day—terrible stories were told of the threats against the families of the colonists; but let it be stated there was never at any time the shadow of a vestige of a wrong contemplated against the women and children. What Indians might do, old Chief Peguis had shown. What the Deschamps, who were half-white men, might do—the mutilated bodies of the dead at Seven Oaks revealed.

Pritchard was sent across to the fort with word that the colonists must save themselves by surrender.

The Coming of the Colonists

Otherwise, Grant could not answer for their safety among his wild Plain Rangers. The panic of the two hundred people inside was pitiable. For a second time they were to be driven houseless to the wilderness, and yet the bolder spirits were for manning the fort and resisting siege. If only they could have known that Selkirk was coming; but Lajimoniere lay captive in the butter-vat prison at Fort William, and Miles MacDonell had not yet come. Without help, how could two hundred people subsist inside the palisades? A white sheet was tied on the end of a pole, and the colonists marched out on June 22nd, at eight in the morning, Grant standing guard to protect them as they embarked in eight boats for Lake Winnipeg. Before abandoning Fort Douglas, Angus Matheson and old Chief Peguis gather a few of the dead and bury them in a dry coulée near the site of the old Cree graveyard at the south end of modern Winnipeg's Main Street. Other bodies are buried as they lie at Seven Oaks; but the graves are so shallow they are ripped open by the wolves. Grant rides along the river bank to protect the colonists from marauders till they have passed the Rapids of St. Andrew's and are well beyond modern Selkirk.

Beyond Selkirk, at the famous camping place of Nettle Creek, whom should the colonists meet but

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the Nor'West partners galloping their canoes at race-horse pace to reach the field of action before Selkirk.

"What news?" calls Norman McLeod; but the news is plain enough in the eight boat loads of dejected colonists.

The Nor'Westers utter a war whoop, beat the gun'els of their canoes, shout their victory. "*Thank Providence,*" writes one partner, Robert Henry, "*that the battle was over before we got there, as it was our intention to storm the fort. Our party consisted of one hundred men, seventy firearms, two field pieces. What our success might have been, I will not pretend to say; but many of us must have fallen in the contest.*" The Nor'Westers have always maintained that they had not planned to attack Fort Douglas and that the onus of blame for the fearful guilt of Seven Oaks Massacre rested on Semple for coming out to oppose the Half-breeds, who were going to meet the Montreal express. Such excuse might do for Eastern law courts, whose aim was to suppress more than they revealed; but the facts do not sustain such an excuse. The events are now a century past. Let us face them without subterfuge. The time had come, the time was bound to come, when the rights of a Feudal Charter would conflict violently with the strong though lawless arm of Young Democracy.

The Coming of the Colonists

Therein lies the significance of what apologists and partisans have called the Skirmish of Seven Oaks.

Norman McLeod, the Justice of the Peace, hails the harried colonists ashore at Nettle Creek. They notice among the Northwest partners several soldiers dressed in regimentals—mark that, those who condemn Selkirk for hiring De Meuron soldiers! Two can play at the game of putting soldiers in red coats to bluff the Indians into believing the government is behind the trader. The settlers notice also, carefully hidden under oilcloth, two or three brass cannon in the Nor'Westers' boats. Mark that, those who condemn Selkirk for bringing cannon along with his bodyguard!

As justice of the peace, Norman McLeod seizes the dead Semple's baggage for incriminating papers. As justice of the peace—though it was queer kind of peace—he arrests those men who escaped from Seven Oaks, and claps them in irons that prevent Bourke, the storekeeper, from dressing his wounds. The colonists are then allowed to proceed to their wintering ground amid the desolate woods of Lake Winnipeg at Jack River.

The triumphant Nor'Westers do not wait long at Red River. McLeod goes on to rule like a despot in Athabasca. The others hurry back to their annual meeting at Fort William, for they know that Selkirk

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

is coming West. Bourke and the prisoners are carried along to be thrown into the butter-vat prison. Dark are the plots the prisoners overhear as they journey up Winnipeg River and Rainy Lake down to Lake Superior. Alex McDonell of the Assiniboine, burning for revenge as usual, urges the partners to make "*his Lordship pay dearly for his conduct coming west; for I will say no more on paper—but there—are fine quiet places along Winnipeg River, if he comes this way!*" And one night in camp on Rainy Lake, Bourke, the prisoner, lying in the dark, hears the Nor'West partners discussing affairs. Selkirk's name comes up. Says Alex McDonell, "*The Half-breeds could easily capture him while he is asleep.*" Bourke does not hear the other's answer; but McDonell rejoins, "*They could have the Indians shoot him.*" Were they planning to assassinate Selkirk coming West? Who knows? Alex McDonell was ever more violent than the rest. As for Selkirk, when word of this conversation came to him, he took care neither to come nor go by Winnipeg River.

In passing back from Red River across Winnipeg Lake, the Nor'Westers pause to destroy that armed Hudson's Bay schooner, which was "to sweep Northwest canoes" from the lake. Down at Fort William, the Hudson's Bay prisoners are flung into the prison

The Coming of the Colonists

along with the captured scout, Lajimoniere. "Things have gone too far; but we can throw the blame on the Indians," says William McGillivray.

"But there was not an Indian took part in the massacre," retorts Dr. John McLoughlin, always fair to the native races, for he has married the Indian widow of that Alex McKay of MacKenzie's voyages and Astor's massacred crew.

In the despatches which were stolen from Lajimoniere, Selkirk had written to Colin Robertson that he was coming to Red River by way of Minnesota to avoid clashes with the Nor'Westers at Fort William. By July he had passed from Lake Simcoe across Georgian Bay to the Sault. Barely had he portaged the Sault to Lake Superior when he meets Miles MacDonell, his special messenger, galloping back from Red River in a narrow canoe with word of the massacre.

What to do now? Selkirk could go on to Red River by way of Minnesota; but his colonists are no longer there. At the Sault are two magistrates of the Indian country—Mr. Askin and Mr. Ermatinger. Lord Selkirk swears out information before them and appeals to them to come with him and arrest the Northwest partners at Fort William. They refuse point-blank. They will have nothing to do with this

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

quarrel between the two great fur companies—this quarrel that really hinges on feudalism versus democracy; English law as against Canadian. To obtain justice in Eastern Canada is impossible. That, Selkirk has learned from a winter of futile bickering for military protection to prevent this very disaster. Selkirk writes fully to the new governor of Canada—Sir John Sherbrooke—that having failed to obtain protection from the Canadian courts he has determined to go on, strong in his own right—as conferred by the charter and as a justice of the peace—to arrest the Northwest partners at Fort William. *“I am reduced to the alternative of acting alone, or of allowing an audacious crime to pass unpunished. I cannot doubt it is my duty to act, though the law may be openly resisted by a set of men accustomed to consider force the only criterion of right.”*

The Nor’Westers had forcibly invaded and destroyed his colony. Now he was forcibly to invade and destroy their fort. Was his decision wise? Was it the first misstep into the legal tangle that broke his courage and sent him baffled to his grave? Let who can answer! Be it remembered that the Canadian authorities had refused him protection; that the Canadian magistrates had refused him redress.

His De Meuron soldiers had not worn their military suits. He bids them don their regalia now and

The Coming of the Colonists

move forward with all the accouterments of war—a feudal lord leading his retinue!

“Between ten and eleven this morning, the Earl of Selkirk accompanied by his bodyguard, came up the river in four canoes,” writes Jasper Vandersluys, a clerk of Fort William, on August 12, 1816. *“Between one and two, he (Selkirk) was followed by eleven or twelve boats, each having from twelve to fifteen soldiers all armed, who encamped on the opposite shore.”* The afternoon passed with Selkirk’s men planting cannon along the river bank, heaping cannon balls in readiness and cleaning all muskets. Nor’West voyageurs and their wives rush inside the palisades. The women are sheltered in a central building upstairs above a trapdoor. The men are sent scurrying to hide one hundred loaded muskets in a hay loft. In the watchtower above the gates stand the Nor’West partners—William McGillivray, the three MacKenzies—Alex, son of Roderick; Kenneth, and old drunken, befuddled Daniel—Simon Fraser, the explorer; several of the McDonell clan, and Dr. John McLoughlin, shaking his head sadly at these preparations for violence. *“There has been too much blood shed already,”* he remarks.

Next afternoon comes a Hudson’s Bay messenger from Selkirk asking for McGillivray. McLoughlin and Kenneth MacKenzie accompany McGillivray

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

across the river. One hour passes; two hours! The women, watching from the loft windows above the trapdoor, began to hope that a truce had been arranged. At seven in the evening the partners had come from the watchtower to shut the gates when two boat loads of some sixty soldiers glide up to the wharf. Fraser and Alex McDonell and old drunken Daniel MacKenzie rush to slam the gates shut. One leaf is banged when a bugle sounds! Captain D'Orsonnens of the soldiers, shouts "To arms, to arms," plants his foot in the gateway and with flourishing sword rushes his men into the courtyard "with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets, shouting, cursing, swearing death and destruction to all persons." One Nor'Wester rushes to ring an alarm bell. The others have dashed for their apartments to destroy papers. In a twinkling, Selkirk's men have captured every cannon in Fort William and are knocking at the doors of the central building. Not a gun has been fired; not a blow struck; not a drop of blood shed; but the trampling feet terrify the women in the attic. They crowd above the trapdoor to hold it down, when, presto! the only tragedy of the semi-farce takes place! The crowding is too much for the trapdoor. Down it crashes spilling the women into the room below, just as the astonished De Meurons dash into the apartment to seal all

The Coming of the Colonists

desks and papers. It is a question whether the soldiers or the women received the greater shock; but the greatest surprise of all is across the river where the three Northwest partners are received by Selkirk between lines of armed soldiers and are promptly arrested, bail refused, for complicity in the massacre of Seven Oaks. Selkirk allows them to go back to the fort on parole for the night and orders the liberation of those Hudson's Bay prisoners in the butter-vat prison—Lajimoniere and the survivors of Seven Oaks, who tell my lord a tale that sharpens his vengeance. The night passes in alarm. Soldiers on guard at the room of each partner detect the Nor'Westers burning papers that might be used as evidence; and the loaded muskets are found in the hay loft; and furs are discovered stamped R. R.—H. B. C.—which have been rifled from some Hudson's Bay post.

Day dawns in a drizzling rain. Across the river comes my Lord Selkirk, himself, with the pomp of a war lord, bugles blowing, soldiers in the boats with muskets on shoulders, a guard to the fore clearing the way. The common voyageurs are forthwith ordered to decamp to the far side of the river. Lord Selkirk takes up quarters in the main house, the partners being marched at bayonet point to other quarters. For four days the farce lasts. Lord Sel-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

kirk as justice of the peace examines and commits for trial all the partners present. The partners present scorn his assumption of authority and formally demand that the voyageurs be sent West with supplies for the year. Selkirk's answer is to seize the voyageurs' canoes and set his soldiers to using the palisades of Fort William for firewood. Then, under pretense of searching for evidence on the massacre at Seven Oaks, he seizes all Northwest documents. Under pretense of searching for stolen furs, he examines all stores. On August 18th, everything is in readiness to conduct the prisoners to Eastern Canada, all except old Daniel MacKenzie.

Drunken old MacKenzie is remanded to the prison for special examination. MacKenzie had long since been incapacitated for active service, and he treasured a grudge against the other partners for forcing him to resign. Why is MacKenzie being held back by Selkirk? Before the other partners are carried off, their suspicions are aroused. Perhaps they see Miles MacDonell and the De Meurons plying the old man in his prison with whiskey. At all events, they command the clerks left in charge to ignore orders from Daniel MacKenzie. They protest he has no authority to act for the Northwest Company. It may be they remember how they had jockeyed John Jacob Astor out of his fort on the Pacific by a

The Coming of the Colonists

forced sale; and now guess the game that is being played with Daniel MacKenzie against them. The partners' baggage is searched. The De Meurons turn even the pockets of the haughty partners inside out. Then the prisoners are embarked in four large canoes under escort of De Meuron soldiers. The canoes are hurriedly loaded and badly crowded. Near the Sault, on August 26th, one swamps and sinks, drowning seven of the people, including the partner, Kenneth MacKenzie. Allan McDonell and Doctor McLoughlin escape by swimming ashore. At what is now Toronto, the prisoners are at once given bail, and they dispatch a constable to arrest Selkirk at Fort William; but Selkirk claps the constable in gaol for the month of November and then ignominiously drums him from the fort. With Selkirk, law is to be observed only when it is English. Canadian courts do not count.

Fuddled with drink, crying pitiably for more, Daniel MacKenzie passed three weeks a prisoner in the butter vat, three more a prisoner in his own room. Six weeks of dissipation, or else his treasured spite against the other partners, now work so on MacKenzie's nerves that he sends for Miles McDonell on September 19th, and offers to sell out the Nor'Westers' possessions, worth £100,000, at Fort

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

William, to Lord Selkirk for £50 down, £2,000 in a year, and the balance as soon as the whole price could be arbitrated by arbitrators appointed by the Lords Chief Justice of England. "*I have been thinking,*" runs his rambling letter in the handwriting of Miles McDonell, "*that as a partner of the North-West Company and the only one here at present that I can act for them myself, that all the company's stores and property here are at my disposal; that my sale of them is legal by which I can secure to myself all the money which the concern owes me and keep the overplus in my hands until a legal demand be made upon me to pay to those entitled. . . . I can not only dispose of the goods but the soil on which they are built if I can find a purchaser.*"

Naturally, MacKenzie finds a purchaser in my Lord Selkirk of the Hudson's Bay and almost at once receives his liberty. Just as McDougall had sold out the Americans on the Columbia, so MacKenzie now sells out the Nor'Westers at Fort William.

Then the old man writes rambling confessions and accusations which—he boasts to Selkirk—contain evidence "*that will hang McGillivray*" for the massacre of Seven Oaks. Selkirk decides to send him to Eastern Canada as a witness against the partners, but before he is sent he writes circular letters to the wintering partners of the Northwest

The Coming of the Colonists

Company advising them to follow his example and save themselves from ruin by turning over their forts to Lord Selkirk. In October he is sent East, but by the time he reaches the Sault, his brain has cleared. He meets John McLoughlin and other Northwest partners returning to the Up Country and confesses what he has done. Instead of turning witness against them, he proceeds East to sue Selkirk for illegal imprisonment.

If Selkirk's first mistake was trying to enforce feudalism on Red River and his second the raiding of Fort William, his third error must be set down as using an old drunkard for his tool. For the first error, he had the excuse that English law was on his side. For the second, he claimed that "*Fort William had become a den of marauders and robbers and he was justified in holding it till the Nor'Westers restored Red River,*" but for the trickery with old MacKenzie there existed no more excuse than for the lawlessness of the Nor'Westers. To say that Miles McDonell wrote the letters with MacKenzie's signature and that he engineered the trick—no more clears Selkirk than to say that paid servants committed the most of the crimes for the Northwest partners. It is the one blot against the most heroic figure in the colonizing of the West. And the trick fooled no one. Not a voyageur, not a trader, flinched in his loyalty

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

to the Northwest Company. Not a man would proceed west with the canoes for the Hudson's Bay officers.

The Lords of the North had fallen and their glory had departed; but not a man of the service faltered in his loyalty. It was a loyalty strong as the serf for the feudal baron.

From Fort William, Selkirk's soldiers radiated to the Northwest posts of Rainy Lake and Minnesota. Peter Grant was brought prisoner from Fond du Lac for obstructing the Selkirk scout, Lajimoniere. At the Pic, at Michipicoten, at Rainy Lake, the De Meuron soldiers appear and the Northwest forts surrender without striking a blow. Then Captain D'Orsonnens sets out in December with twenty-six men for Red River. He is guided by J. Ba'tiste Lajimoniere and the white man who had lived among the Ojibbways—Tanner. They lead him along the iced river bed to Rainy Lake, then strike straight westward through the snow-padded forests of Minnesota for the swamp lands that drain to Red River near the Boundary. All travel by snowshoes, bivouacking under the stars. Then a dash down Red River by night march on the ice and the Selkirk forces are within striking distance of Fort Douglas by the first week of January, 1817. Wind and

The Coming of the Colonists

weather favor them. A howling blizzard enshrouds earth and air. They go westward to the Assiniboine in the wooded region now known as St. James and Silver Heights. Here in the woods, hidden by the snowstorm, they construct scaling ladders. On the night of January 10th, the storm is still raging. D'Orsonnens rushes his men across to Fort Douglas. Up with the scaling ladders and over the walls are the De Meurons before the Nor'Westers know they are attacked! As fell Fort William, so falls Fort Douglas without a blow or the loss of a life. J. Ba'tiste learns with joy that his wife, Marie Gaborry, has not been murdered at all but is living safe under old Chief Peguis' protection across Red River, and the French woman's amazement may be guessed when there appeared at the hut where Peguis had left her, the wraith of the husband whom she had believed dead for two years. Tanner, the other scout, stays in D'Orsonnens' service till Selkirk comes.

The dispossessed Nor'Westers scatter to Lake Winnipeg. After them marches D'Orsonnens to Winnipeg River, where Alex McDonell is trying to bribe the Indians to sink Selkirk's boats when he comes in the spring. The De Meurons capture the post at Winnipeg River, and send coureurs to recall the scattered colonists. Alex McDonell escapes to the interior.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

All the while, from June 19th to January 19th, the colonists had been wandering like the children of Israel in a wilderness of woes. When they had been driven to Lake Winnipeg by the massacre, they had begged Mr. Bird of the Saskatchewan to forward them to Hudson Bay, whence they could take ship for England, but Bird pointed out there was no boat coming to the bay in 1816 large enough to carry two hundred people. To go to the bay for the winter would be to risk death from starvation. Better winter on the good hunting and fishing grounds of Lake Winnipeg. It was well the majority took his advice, for the Company ships this year were locked in the bay by the ice. Cameron, the Northwest prisoner, and Colin Robertson, his inveterate enemy, were both icebound at Moose. The few settlers who pushed forward to the bay like the widow McLean, wife of the murdered settler, passed a winter of semi-starvation at the forts.

Bird set the colonists fishing for the winter, and they erected huts at Jack River. Here, then, came De Meuron soldiers in the spring of 1817, to lead the wandering colonists back to Red River; and to Red River came Selkirk by way of Minnesota in the summer. For the first time the nobleman now saw the Promised Land to which he had blazed a trail of suffering and sacrifice and blood and devotion

The Coming of the Colonists

for Earth's Dispossessed of all the world! D'Orsonnens had given out a few packs of seed, grain and potatoes to each settler. Rude little thatch-roofed cabins had been knocked together with furniture extemporized of trees and stumps. Round each cabin there swayed in the yellow July light to the rippling prairie wind, tiny checker-board patches of wheat and barley and oats, first fruits of infinite sacrifice, of infinite suffering, of infinite despair—type for all time, sacrificial and sacred, of the Pioneer! For the first time Selkirk now saw the rolling prairie land, the rolling prairie world, the seas of unpeopled, fenceless, limitless fields, free as air, broad as ocean! To these prairie lands had he blazed the Trail. Was it worth while—the suffering on that Trail, the ignominy he was yet to suffer for that Trail? Did Selkirk foresee where that Trail was to lead; how the multitudinous feet of Life's Lost, Earth's Dispossessed, would trample along that Trail to New Life, New Hope, New Freedom? Faith in God, confidence in high destiny, had been to the children of Israel through their wilderness, a cloud of shade by day, a pillar of fire by night. Had Selkirk the comfort of the same vision, confidence of the same high destiny for his people? I cannot answer that. From the despairing tone of his letters, I fear not. All we know is that like all other great leaders he made

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

mistakes, and the consequences of those mistakes hounded him to his death.

In August, he gathered the people round him on the spot where St. John's Cathedral now stands. He shook hands with each and learned from each his tale of suffering. To each he gave one hundred acres of land free of all charges, as compensation for their hardships. Then he gave them two more lots. "This lot on which we stand, shall be for your church," he said. "That lot south of the creek shall be for your school; and in memory of your native parish, this place shall be called Kildonan." To render the title of the colonists' land doubly secure, Selkirk had assembled the Swampy Crees and Saulteaux on July 18th and made treaty with them for Red River on condition of a quit-rent of one hundred pounds of tobacco. To Lajimoniere, the scout, Selkirk assigned land in the modern St. Boniface, that brought to Marie Gaboury's children, and her children's children, untold wealth in the town lots of a later day. Tanner, the stolen white boy, Selkirk tried to recompense by advertising for his relatives in American papers. A brother in Ohio answered the advertisement and came to Red River to meet the long lost boy. The restoration was fraught with just such disaster as usually attends the sudden transplanting of any wild thing. Tanner, the white

The Coming of the Colonists

boy, had become Tanner the grown Indian. He left his Indian wife and married a Christian girl of Detroit. The union was agony to them both. Tanner was a man at war in his own nature—neither white man nor Indian. In a quarrel at the Sault some years later, he was accused of shooting a man and fled from arrest to the swamps. When spring came, his skeleton was found. He had either suicided in despair, or wounded himself by accident and perished of starvation in the swamp. Many years afterwards the confession of a renegade soldier in Texas cleared Tanner's reputation of all guilt. The soldier himself had committed the murder, and poor Tanner had fled from the terrors of laws he did not understand like a hunted Ishmaelite to the wilderness. To-day, some of his descendants are among the foremost settlers of Minnesota.

In May, 1817, Royal Proclamation had commanded both companies to desist from disorders and restore each other's property. William Bachelor Coltman and Major Fletcher came as Royal Commissioners to restore order and take evidence. Fort William passed back to the Nor'Westers and a new Gibraltar arose on the banks of the Assiniboine. Urgent interests called Selkirk East. Trials were pending in Upper and Lower Canada against both

companies for the disorders. With Tanner as guide to the Mississippi, Selkirk evaded the plots of the Nor'Westers by going south to St. Louis, east to New York, and north to Canada.

Volumes have been written and heads cracked and reputations broken on the justice or injustice of the famous trials between the Nor'Westers and Hudson's Bay. Robertson, the Hudson's Bay man, was to be tried for seizing Gibraltar. The Nor'Westers were charged with being accomplices to the massacre of Seven Oaks. Selkirk was sued for the imprisonment of Daniel MacKenzie and the resistance offered to the Canadian sheriff at Fort William. In every case except the two civil actions against Selkirk, the verdict was "not guilty." Whether the judges were bribed by the Nor'Westers as the Hudson's Bay charged, or the juries were "unduly influenced" by Selkirk's passionate address and pamphlets, as the Nor'Westers declared—I do not purpose discussing here. Selkirk was sentenced to pay £1,500 for imprisoning Daniel MacKenzie and £500 for resisting the sheriff. As for the verdicts, I do not see how a Canadian court could have given a verdict favorable to the Hudson's Bay, without repudiating rights of Canadian possession; or a verdict favorable to the Nor'Westers, without repudiating the laws of the British Empire. The truth is—the old royal charter

The Coming of the Colonists

had created a condition of dual authority that was responsible for all the train of disasters. It was unofficially conveyed to the leaders of both companies by the British Government that if they could see their way to union, it would remove the necessity of the British Government determining which company possessed the alleged rights.

As for Selkirk's fines, they were paid jointly by the Hudson's Bay Company and himself. William Williams, a swashbuckler military man, is appointed at £1,000 a year to succeed Semple and force the trade so that the Nor'Westers will be compelled to sue for union and accept what terms are offered. More men are to be sent up from Montreal to capture Athabasca. The Rev. John West is appointed clergyman of Red River in 1819, at £100 a year. Annuities of £50 each are granted for life to Semple's two sisters. Pensions are granted the widows of settlers killed at Seven Oaks—to the widows McLean, Donovan, Coan and two others. Oman Norquay, forbear of Premier Norquay of modern Manitoba, is permitted to quit the Company service and join the colony. So are the Gunn brothers and the Bannermans, and the Mathesons, and the Isbisters, and the Inksters, and the Hardisties, and the Spencers, and the Fletts, and the Birds. Selkirk has gone to France for his health, harried and weary

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

of the thankless strife. On November 8, 1820, he dies. The same year, passes away his great opponent in trade and aim—Sir Alexander MacKenzie, in Scotland. The year that these two famous leaders and rivals died, there was born in Scotland the next great leader of the next great era in the West, the nation building era that was to succeed the pioneering—Donald Smith, to become famous as Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal.

Notes to Chapter XXVIII.—The data for this chapter are gathered from so many sources, it is almost impossible to give except in a bibliographical list. Every book or pamphlet written on this era I possess in my library and consulted, and I may add—ignored, for the reason that all are so absurdly partisan, either a rabid defense of the H. B. C. making no mention of the faults of the English, or a rabid attack on the H. B. C. giving not a jot of the most damning evidence against the N. W. C.

While consulting *all* secondary authorities on this chapter, I have relied solely on the confidential reports to the British Government which I obtained from the Records Office by special permission of the Colonial Secretary. These include Sherbrooke's report to Bathurst, Coltman's confidential summary to Sherbrooke, the letters which the N. W. C. showered upon the Home Government, the memorials with letters appended which the H. B. C. filed. From these sources I got the letters from which all direct quotations are made, such, for instance, as the plan to assassinate Selkirk, which tells against the Nor'Westers; or the trickery with Daniel MacKenzie, which tells against Selkirk. Nor have I quoted the worst of these letters; for instance, the details where Alex McDonell plans the death of Selkirk. Alex McDonell must not be taken too seriously as representing the Nor'Westers' sentiment, for from the time his brother Eneas was killed by a H. B. C. man, Alex McDonell was no longer sane on the subject. He was a Highlander gone mad with revenge. Nor have I quoted the evidence of an H. B. C. man about the N. W. C. partners walking over the field of Seven Oaks cracking jokes about the mangled bodies of the slain. The witnesses who gave such evidence were

The Coming of the Colonists

ignorant men with inflamed minds, and in addition—I am sorry to add—liars! In the first place, the bodies had been buried before the partners arrived. In the second, though the wolves tore the bodies up, Dr. McLoughlin and Simon Fraser were not the kind of men to exult ghoulishly over the scalped corpses of dead white men. It shows the absurd lengths to which fanaticism had run when such testimony was credited, and is of a piece with that other vulgar slander that the N. W. C. intended to turn the Half-breeds loose among the women and children.

It may be objected that “trickery” is too strong a term regarding the treatment of old Daniel MacKenzie, especially in view of the fact he himself was avowedly unreliable. The evidence must speak for itself. MacKenzie had been induced to write letters to the wintering partners advising them to turn things over to Selkirk. When his name was signed, MacDonell undertook to change the letter. Here is one with MacDonell's changes in brackets:

TO RODERICK MACKENZIE

Fort William on Lake Superior. Sept. 1816.

DEAR RODERICK (Sir):

By a canoe that returned (to the interior) from near the Mountain Portage, you must have heard the events that has taken place here. Mr. McGillivray and all the partners including myself, were made prisoners. All the gentlemen are sent down prisoners to take their trial at York as aiding, abetting and instigating the murder, the dreadful massacre. The N. W. C. is ruined beyond a hope. (The packs here will not go down nor will goods be permitted to enter the interior, the Red River being declared in a state of rebellion.) The massacre that has taken place on Red River is the (principal) cause of all this. Lord Selkirk may (perhaps) soften matters in your favor provided you will (make your submission to him in time and) honestly own all that you know about the instigators of this horrid affair. I have his Lordship's command to tell you so (I have heard as much, though not direct from his Lordship) and I would advise you as your own and the friend of your deceased father to (come forward immediately with some proposal to save yourself) submit to his Lordship's pleasure. You should also explain to these deluded half breeds (young men whom you may see and the unfortunate half breeds who were guilty of such extremities) that it was the ambition of others that rendered us all miserable. That is the real truth. (I am happy to learn that you endeavored to save Gov. Semple's life. This is much in your favor. . . . The only advice I have to give is to submit, etc.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

I have some thirty pages of transcripts on the Athabasca Campaign this year of 1816. Space does not permit the full story of the first campaign. The second campaign, Colin Robertson tells in the next chapter. I have also omitted the story of Keveney's murder. It is not an integral part of the struggle. Keveney had been Selkirk's recruiting agent in Ireland, and was hurrying from Albany to join Selkirk at Red River in September, 1816. He proved a very brute to his men, lying in state while they toiled at the oar, then at night sticking a bayonet in any poor guard who chanced to fall asleep on duty. His men deserted him. Keveney was captured by the N. W. C. on Winnipeg River and treated as a gentleman among the officers. This treatment he abused by trying to escape. The N. W. C. then handcuffed him, but what were they to do with him? They did not want him in Red River as a spy, and Selkirk held Fort William. They ordered an Indian and a paid soldier (de Reinhard) to take him out in a boat and kill him on the way up Winnipeg River. The Indian shot him. Reinhard finished the murder by running a sword through his body. This sort of high-handed ruffianism should be remembered when considering Selkirk's course at Fort William. Reinhard was carried prisoner to Montreal for this, but there was no conviction.

The exact number of soldiers employed by Selkirk is given as one hundred and forty. The other sixty men were voyageurs.

I have purposely omitted the name of another McDonell in this chapter—namely the man who succeeded Governor Semple as commander of Fort Douglas for two days before the surrender. There are so many McDonells in this chapter and all related that I have avoided mentioning any but the main actors. All of these who survived the fights finally retired to live in Glengarry on the Ottawa and in Cornwall. One may guess with so many members of the fiery clan on opposing sides, how old age arguments must have waxed hot. The McDonells of Toronto are kin of this clan. Governor Semple's successor was known as "grasshopper McDonell."

Many writers state no colonists were killed at Seven Oaks. Nevertheless, five widows were pensioned, one poor widow on condition she could prove her claim, as another woman claimed the pension of the deceased settler.

Semple had been employed only a year when he met death. Yet the company pensioned his two sisters for life, though the H. B. C. was on the verge of bankruptcy. Semple's father left Philadelphia for London when the Revolutionary War broke out.

The Coming of the Colonists

The N. W. C. say that Selkirk meant from the first to attack Fort William. This is nonsense. The letters sent by Lajimoniere warned Robertson to prepare for him in Minnesota. The letter was stopped by the N. W. C. and found by Selkirk in a secret press at Fort William. Did the Nor'Westers intend to attack Fort Douglas? They say not, but between attacking a fort and starving it out is not wide difference.

In most of the evidence it is shown that Boucher ordered Semple in French, Semple answering in English. I have given it all in English.

A full account of Seven Oaks will be found in the novel, "Lords of the North," with free rendering of Pierre's song. The fate of the Deschamps will be found in "The Story of the Trapper."

Coltman's official report is marvelously impartial, considering he had formerly been an agent for the H. B. C. Major Fletcher did not count. Tradition and private letters of Sherbrooke relate that the major was scarcely sober during the journey of investigation.

Full account of Tanner's life will be found in the Minnesota Hist. Society's Collections. Tanner was the son of a clergyman on the Ohio. He was stolen by wandering Shawnees when barely eight years old, and sold to a woman chieftain of the Ottawas at the Sault. Here at an early age he married a native girl. When his brother found him at Red River, Tanner was averse to going back to civilization: He hated the white man clothes, which his brother induced him to wear, and appeared at Mackinac a grotesque figure with coat sleeves and trouser legs foreshortened. The Wisconsin Society's Historical Collection contains an account of him at this period. At Mackinac, his squaw wife, of whom he was very fond, refused to go on with him to the white man's land, and she remained at Mackinac. Poor Tanner's stay in civilization was short. He came back to the Sault with a white wife. The man, of whose death he was accused, was the brother of Henry Schoolcraft at the Sault. The quarrel was over attentions to a young daughter of Tanner's. As stated in the main story, a blackguard soldier, not Tanner, was the real murderer:

Instructions from Governor Semple to Colin Robertson.

FORT DOUGLAS, 12 April, 1816.

COLIN ROBERTSON, Esq.,

Sir:

I heard with pleasure of yr. having taken possession of the Fort occupied by the N. W. C. at the Forks of Red River.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

It was a measure on wh. I was fully determined and wh. was not only justified but imperiously demanded by the conduct and avowed hostilities of our implacable opponents.

With regard to intercepting the despatches of the N. W. C. it was a step arising out of the former and wh. has happily furnished its own justification to the fullest extent. A more complete disclosure of plans of deliberate villainy has never yet met my eye and I can only regret that such schemes of pillage, burning and murder should have been planned and be so nearly on the point of execution by men belonging to the same country as ourselves.

I am, Sir,

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT SEMPLE.

(Signed)

Governor Semple to Duncan Cameron

FORT DOUGLAS, 31 March, 1816.

Sir:

I regret that an indisposition subsequent to my arrival here has prevented my addressing you till now. I think it my duty to tell you as soon as possible the charges alleged against you and wh. I assure you will demand yr. most serious consideration.,

1st. You are accused of seducing His Majesty's subjects settled on Red River and the servants of the Earl of Selkirk to desert and defraud their master and one to whom the former were largely indebted.

2d. Of collecting, harbouring and encouraging Half-breeds and vagabonds with the avowed purpose of destroying an Infant British Colony.

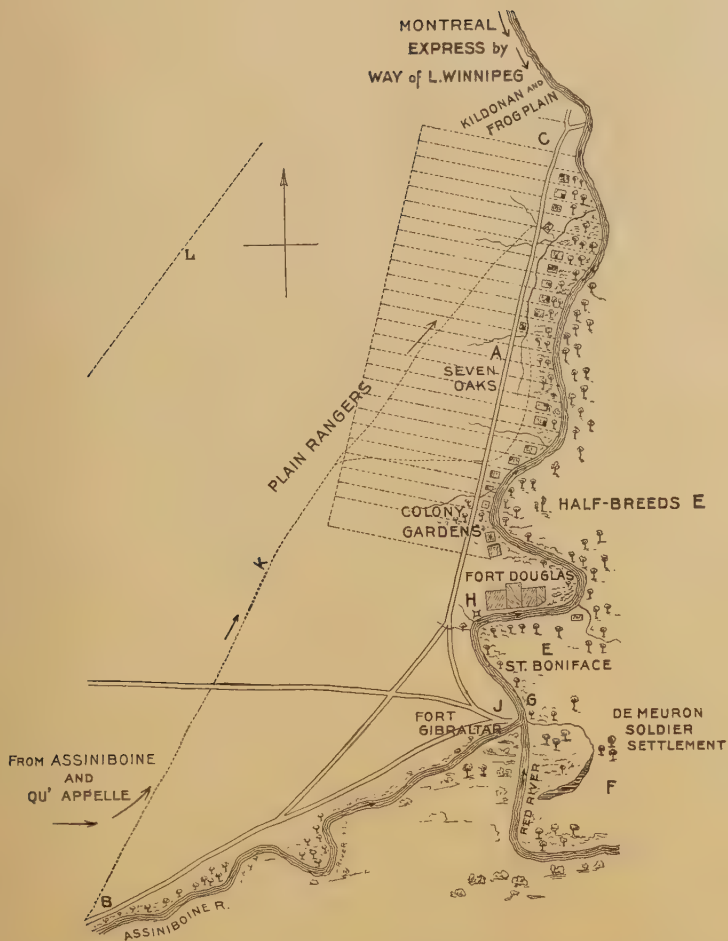
3d. Through the means of these men thus collected of firing upon, wounding and causing the death of His Majesty's subjects defending their property in their own houses.

4th. Through the means of these men headed by yr. clerks or the clerks of the N. W. C. such as Cuthbert Grant, Charles Hesse, Bostonais Pangman, William Shaw and others of burning a fort, a mill, sundry houses, carts, ploughs and instruments of agriculture belonging to the said infant colony.

5th. Of wantonly destroying English cattle brought here at an immense expense and of carrying off horses, dogs and other property to a large amount.

The horses were collected in your own fort and distributed by yourself and your partner Mr. A. McDonnell, to those men who had most distinguished themselves in the above act of robbery and mischief.

6th. Of encouraging Indian tribes to make war upon British subjects attempting to colonize, representing to them ac-



Red River Settlement in 1816 to 1820, taken from the Manuscript Drawing in Coltman's Report, Public Records, London. This diagram has been reproduced many times, but not so fully as in Coltman's original drawing for the Government.

The Coming of the Colonists

cordova to their ideas that cattlemen would spoil their lands and make them miserable, and expressing your hope they would never allow it.

7th. Without unnecessarily multiplying charges it appears now by your own letters that you were making every preparation to renew the same atrocities this year, if possible on a more extensive scale, collecting the Half-Breeds from points still more distant than before and endeavoring to influence both their rage and avarice by every means in yr. power. You even breathe the pious wish that the Pilleurs may be excited against us here saying "they may make a very good booty if they only go cunningly to work."

Such are the principal charges you will be called upon to answer. It would be easy but at present unnecessary to swell the catalogue with minor but serious accusations and however much a long residence here may induce you to consider them of small importance, depend upon it they will be viewed in a very different light by a British jury and a British public.

The whole mass of intercepted papers now in my hands appears to disclose such wicked principles and transactions that I think it my duty to forward them to be laid before His Maj.'s ministers by the director of the Honourable, the H. B. C. I am preparing a letter to the agents and proprietors of the N. W. C. advising them of this my resolution and the motives wh. have determined me to it, a copy of wh. shall be handed to you meantime.

I remain, Sir,

ROBERT SEMPLE.

D. CAMERON, Esq.

CHAPTER XXIX

1816-1821

BOTH COMPANIES MAKE A DASH TO CAPTURE ATHABASCA WHENCE CAME THE MOST VALUABLE FURS—ROBERTSON OVERLAND TO MONTREAL, TRIED AND ACQUITTED, LEADS A BRIGADE TO ATHABASCA—HE IS TRICKED BY THE NOR'-WESTERS, BUT TRICKS THEM IN TURN—THE UNION OF THE COMPANIES—SIR GEORGE SIMPSON, GOVERNOR.

IT WAS mid-winter before word that Fort Douglas had fallen into the hands of the Nor'Westers and Fort William into the hands of Lord Selkirk, came to Colin Robertson icebound at Moose. Robertson was ever the stormy petrel of every fight—one of those doughty heroes of iron strength who thought no more of tramping seven hundred miles on snowshoes for Christmas dinner with some comrade of the wilds than town men think of a voyage across their own dining-room. Though he knew very well that the Half-breeds had threatened "to flay him alive," that the Indians had been bribed to scalp him, and that warrants were out in Montreal

Both Companies Make a Dash

for his arrest in connection with the seizure of Gibraltar from the Nor'Wester, Cameron—Robertson did not hesitate for a moment. He set out on snowshoes for Montreal. Now that Selkirk was on the field, Robertson knew it would be a fight to the death. The company that captured Athabasca, whence came the wealth of furs, would be able to force the other to terms of union.

To be sure, Sherbrooke, Governor General of Canada, had issued a Royal Proclamation commanding peace; but Williams, the new Hudson's Bay governor, declared "the royal proclamation was all d—— nonsense!" He "would drive every Nor'Wester out of the country or perish in the attempt." On the Nor'Westers' side was equal defiance of the Proclamation. The most of the Northwest Eastern partners were either under bail or yet in confinement. Of their Western partners, Norman McLeod, the justice of the peace, was the ruling spirit; and his views of the Canadian Proclamation may be guessed from orders to his bullies in Athabasca: "Go it, my lads! Go it! You can do what you like here! There is no law in the Indian Territory!"

Down to Montreal, then, came Colin Robertson, full of fight as an Irishman of Tipperary. "The effusions of the Nor'Westers might have staggered my resolution to come to Montreal," he writes in his

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

letters of 1817 to officers of the Hudson's Bay Company. "Robertson go to Montreal! No! He may find his way to the States if we don't catch him!' Such was the language held forth at Sault Ste. Marie, Lake Superior, which had no other effect on me than calling forth a little caution. . . . I was at the Sault when a fur trader made his appearance in a light canoe on his way from Red River to Montreal. With him, I embarked and arrived at the Lake of the Two Mountains on the 11th of August, 1817. . . . As soon as the fur trader pushed off, I requested a Frenchman to furnish me with a small Indian canoe and two faithful Iroquois . . . I embarked at midnight . . . and crossed the lake about an hour after sunrise. . . . M. de Lotbiniere . . . furnished me with a calash at eleven that night. . . . I entered Montreal at five in the morning and drove to Dr. Monroe's, the least suspicious place, his profession making early calls frequent. I was at once recognized by the doctor, who informed me that a partner of the North-West Company had apartments in the upper part of the house. I immediately muffled myself in my cloak and so entered. . . . As soon as I had breakfast, I made my appearance in the streets of Montreal, where I was stared at by friends of the Nor'Westers as if I were a ghost . . . and my

Both Companies Make a Dash

appearance gathered such a crowd, I was obliged to disappear inside a boarding house. . . . ”

“The residences of the Nor’Westers in London and Montreal are splendid establishments, the resorts of the first in society, the benefit from this ostentatious display of wealth being the friendship of legal authorities. . . . Even the prisons of Montreal are become places of public entertainment from the circumstance of yet holding some partners of the North-West Company. . . . Every other night, a ball or supper is given; and the Highland bagpipes utter the sound of martial music as if to deafen public censure. The most glaring instance of the Nor’Westers’ contempt for law is their attempt to attract public notice by illuminating all the prison windows every night. Strangers will naturally ask: ‘for what crimes are these gentlemen committed? For debt?’ No . . . for murder . . . arson . . . robbery. . . . Our old friend, Mr. Astor, is here. . . . He is frequently in the society of the Nor’Westers . . . and feels very sore toward them about Astoria.”

Robertson’s letters then tell of his trial for the seizure of Gibraltar and his acquittal. He frankly hints that his lawyers had to bribe the Montreal judge to secure “a fair” hearing. So passed the year. In 1818 came Selkirk back from Red River

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

to Montreal, who agreed with Robertson that the only way to force the Nor'Westers to their knees was to send a second expedition to capture Athabasca, whence came the wealth of furs that enabled the rival Company to bribe the courts. In April, 1819, Robertson set out with a flotilla of nineteen canoes from Ste. Anne's, each canoe with five French voyageurs, and went up the Ottawa across Lake Superior to Thunder Bay. "This place gave me a bad turn the other day," he writes. "The wind blew fresh but the swell was by no means high. My Indians seemed reluctant to attempt the traverse. I imprudently ordered them a glass of rum, when the whoop was immediately given! In a moment, our canoe was in the swell. We came where a heavy sea was running. Here, we began to ship water. The guide ordered the bowman removed back to the second thwart. This lightened the head. An oilcloth was then thrown over the head of a canoe to avoid the breaking of the sea. The silence that prevailed, when one of those heavy swells was rolling upon us, was truly appalling. Paddles were lifted and all watched the approach with perfect composure. Our steersman kept balancing the slender bark by placing her in the best position to the waves. . . . The moment the roller passed, every paddle was in the water, every nerve stretched to gain the land! Although

Both Companies Make a Dash

two men were employed bailing out water, fifty yards more would have swamped us. . . . ”

From Lake Superior, the brigade passed up to the Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg, where Robertson was joined by the same John Clarke who had suffered defeat in Athabasca on the first expedition. Here the forces were increased to one hundred and thirty men by the refugees of the first brigade, who had escaped from the North. Robertson's letter from this point gives some particulars of the first brigade's expulsion from Athabasca: “The Nor'Westers did not confine themselves to the seizure of persons and property. They administered an oath to our servants, threatening with starvation and imprisonment if they did not comply, that for the space of three years these Hudson's Bay servants would not attempt to oppose the North-West Company. One of the guides, a witty rogue, who knew theology from the circumstance of his cousin being a priest, fell on a way of absolving his French countrymen from this oath . . . to repair to the woods and cross themselves and ask pardon of their Maker for a false oath to a heretic; but some poor Scotchmen could not cheat their conscience so easily, and I have had to let them leave me on that account. . . . ”

The Nor'Westers had kept as a deadly secret from

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the Indians all knowledge of the fact they had been beaten by Lord Selkirk. Robertson's next letter tells how the secret leaked out in Athabasca. Amidst the uproarious carousals of the Nor'Westers at Chipewyan, the Hudson's Bay captives were brought to the mess room to be the butt of drunken jokes. On one occasion, Norman McLeod bawled out a song in celebration of the massacre of settlers at Red River, of which each verse ended in this couplet:

"The H. B. C. came up a hill, and up a hill they came,
The H. B. C. came *up* the hill, but *down* they went
again!"

Roars of laughter were making the rafters ring when it suddenly struck one of the Hudson's Bay prisoners that the brutal jeer might be paid back in kind.

"Y' hae niver asked me for a song," says the canny Hudson's Bay McFarlane to his Nor'West tormentor. "If agreeable, I hae a varse o' me ain compaesin'."

"Silence, gentlemen," roars McLeod to the drunken roomful of partners and clerks and Indians.

"Silence! Mr. McFarlane, your song."

Remembering that the power of the Northwest Company with the Indians depended on the frightened savages being kept ignorant of Lord Selkirk's victories, the Hudson's Bay man's thin voice piped up these words to the same tune:

Both Companies Make a Dash

“But Selkirk brave went up a hill, and to Fort William came,
When in he popped—and out from thence—could not be driven—a-g-a-i-n!”

Before the last words had died in the appalling silence that fell on the rowdies, or the Indians could quite grasp what the song meant, McLeod had jumped from his chair yelling:

“I’ll give you a hundred guineas if you’ll tell the name of the man who brought news of that here.”

But McFarlane had no wish to see some faithful coureur’s back ripped open with the lash. “Tut-tut,” says he, “a hundred guineas for twa lines of me ain compaesin’—Extravagant, Mr. McLeod, Sir!”

October saw Robertson at last on the field of action—in Athabasca. “Well may the Nor’Westers boast of success in the North,” he writes. “Not an Indian dare speak to the Hudson’s Bay. At Isle a la Crosse, a clerk and a few of our men were in a hut surrounded by the sentinels of our opponents. Apart from no intercourse with the Indians, they were thankful to be able to procure mere subsistence for themselves. All their fish nets and canoes had been destroyed by the Nor’Westers in prowling excursions. The only canoe on which their escape depended was hidden in a bedroom. No Indian dared to approach. The

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

windows were covered by damaged table cloths. Wild fowl shot flying over the house had to be plucked with the door shut. . . . Not an Indian could be found. . . . As we voyaged up to Athabasca, we began firing and kept our men singing a voyageur's song to let the Indians know we were passing." Finally, an Indian was seen hiding behind brush of the river bank, and was bribed to go and bring his tribe. The truth was told to the Chippewyans about the Nor'Westers' defeat on Red River and Lake Superior. Peace pipes were whiffed, and a treaty made.

The consternation of the Nor'Westers when they saw Robertson, and Clarke whom they had abused in captivity three years before, now draw up on Athabasca Lake before Fort Chippewyan with a force of one hundred and thirty armed men, at once gave place to plots for the ruin of the intruders. Black, who had been the chief tormentor of Clarke, dashed down to the waterside shouting: "Mr. Robertson! Mr. Robertson! To avoid trouble, let me speak to our Indians before you land! You are an honorable man—give us justice!"

"Honorable," roared the indignant Clarke, shaking the canoe in his wrath. "Justice be blanked! Did you give *us* justice when you hounded us out of Athabasca," and he followed the serenade up with

Both Companies Make a Dash

a volley that brought the whole Northwest Company to the shore.

Before trouble could brew, Robertson marshaled his men to the old Hudson's Bay quarters, and within a few days more than forty Indian tents had deserted from the Nor'Westers. Clarke was sent up Peace River for the winter. Robertson retained a force of one hundred men well equipped with arms and provisions to hold the fort at Lake Athabasca. "We had completed the fitting out of the Indians," he writes, "established our fisheries and closed the fall business when the loaded canoes of the Northwest hunters began to arrive. Black, the Nor'Wester, is now in his glory, leading his bullies. Every evening they come over to our fort in a body, calling on our men to come out and fight pitched battles. One of their hair-pulling bullies got his challenge accepted and an unmerciful thrashing to boot from a little Frenchman of ours—Boucher. Mr. Simon McGillivray, the chief partner of the Nor'Westers, who is with Mr. McLeod, was rather forward on this occasion. Having a strong force, he approached too near. I ordered our men to arms and his party made a precipitate retreat. Our men are in high spirits. The Indians have regained confidence in us and boldly leave the Nor'Westers every day for the Hudson's Bay."

Now that their winter hunters had come in, and

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

they were stronger, the Nor'Westers were not to be so easily routed from Athabasca. Robertson's next letters are dated from the Nor'Westers' fort. He had been captured within ten days of his arrival. "You . . . will perceive from the date of this letter, the great reverse. . . . If I were the only sufferer it might be borne, but when I reflect on the consequences to the Hudson's Bay Company and to Lord Selkirk, it almost drives me mad. . . . On the morning of the 11th of October, about an hour before day, my servant entered my bedroom and informed me a canoe had just arrived with the body of a fisherman accidentally shot the night before. . . . Sleep was out of the question. I rose and ordered an early breakfast, but just as we were sitting down one of the men entered with word that a Northwest bully had come and was daring little Boucher to fight. As was my custom, I put a pistol in my pocket and going toward the fellow saw Mr. Simon McGillivray, the Northwest partner. . . . Just then eight or ten Nor'Westers made a rush from concealment behind. . . . It was all a trick. . . . I was surrounded. . . . In the struggle my pistol got entangled and went off. . . . At the sound, they rushed on me and dragged me to the beach. . . . I freed myself and laid about with my empty pistol. . . . When thrown in the

Both Companies Make a Dash

canoe, I tried to upset and escape by swimming, but Black put a pistol to my head till we arrived at the Nor'Westers' fort. . . . Landing, I dashed for their Indian Hall and at once . . . called on the Indians, representing that the cowardly attack was an effort to reduce *them* to slavery; but Black rushed up to stop me. Seizing a fork on the hall table I kept the vagabond at bay. I loaded him with every abuse and evil name I could think of, then to the Indians: 'Do not abandon the Hudson's Bay on this account! There are brave men at our fort to protect you! That fellow was not brave enough to *seize* me; he *stole* me, and he would now rob you of your hunt if it were not for the young men I have left in my fort. Tell Clarke not to be discouraged. We will be revenged for this, but not like wolves prowling in the bushes. We will capture them as we captured them at Fort William, with the sun shining on our faces.' At this moment, the Indian chief came up and squeezing my hand, whispered, 'Never mind, white man! All right! We are your friends.' . . . This closed the turbulent scene. . . . Figure my feelings . . . tumbled by an act of illegal violence from the summit of hope . . . confidence of friends withdrawn . . . all my prospects for life blasted . . . mere personal danger is secondary now—I am in despair."

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Simon McGillivray, Black, McIntosh, McLeod, in a word, the most influential partners in the Northwest Company were at Fort Chippewyan when Robertson was captured; but the post was in charge of that John George McTavish, who had helped to trick Astor out of his fur post on the Columbia. It was probably the ruinous lawsuits against the Nor'Westers that now restrained their savage followers from carrying out their threat "to scalp Robertson and feed him to the dogs," but the Hudson's Bay leader was clapped into a small room with log walls, under guard day and night. He was compelled to state his simplest wants in a formal daily letter. Pen and paper, the clothes on his back, a jack-knife in his pocket—that was Robertson's entire paraphernalia during his captivity; but for all that, he outwitted the enemy. One of his written requests was that a Nor'Wester go across to the Hudson's Bay fort under flag of truce for a supply of liquor. The Nor'Westers were delighted at the chance to spy on the Hudson's Bay fort, and doubly delighted at the prospect of their captive fuddling himself *hors de combat* with drink. It was an easy trick to give a rival his quietus with whiskey.

Taking long strips of writing paper, the Hudson's Bay man invented a cipher code in numbers from one to six hundred, some well known trading phrase

Both Companies Make a Dash

placed opposite each number. This he rolled like a spool, so tight it was waterproof, sealed each end with wax, knocked the bung out of the whiskey barrel, bored a tiny hole beside the bung with his jackknife, hooked a piece of twine through one end to the sealed message, the other to the inner end of the plug, thrust the paper inside the liquor and plugged up the hole. Then dusting all over with mud from the floor of the cabin, he complained the whiskey was musty—diluted with rum. He requested that it be sent back with orders for his men to cleanse the barrel. Before sending it back, the Nor'Westers actually sealed the barrel "contents unknown." But what was Robertson's disgust when the men of the fort instead of cleansing *this* barrel, sent back a fresh one!

Again he put his wits to work. Sending for a volume of Shakespeare's plays, he wrote in fine pencil opposite Falstaff's name: "Examine—the—first—keg." The messenger, who went for the weekly supply, carried the Shakespeare back to the Hudson's Bay fort. A week passed. No sign came from his men. Exasperated to the point of risk, Robertson tried a last expedient. The next week, the messenger carried an open letter to Robertson's men. It was inspected by his captors but allowed to pass. It read: "To amuse myself, I am trying to throw into verse some of Falstaff's good sayings. There is one

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

expression where he blows out, 'I am not a *wit* but the cause of *wit* in others.' This sounds harsh. Please send exact words as in the play." No doubt the Northwest partners thought poor Robertson far gone with liquor when he took to versifying. Back came word with the week's supplies, stating that the volume of Shakespeare had been carried off to the fishery by one of the traders; but "would Mr. Robertson please let his men know if he wished the following traders to have the following supplies"—a string of figures conveying the joyful news that the cypher had been found; the Hudson's Bay fort was on guard against surprise; the men were in good spirits; the Indians loyal; all things prosperous.

For eight months a prisoner in a small room, Robertson directed the men of his own fort by means of the whiskey kegs, sending word of all secrets he could learn in the enemy's camp, checkmating every move of the Nor'Westers among the Indians. In vain, he urged his followers to sally out and rescue him. The Hudson's Bay traders were not willing to risk another such massacre as on Red River. Immunity bred carelessness. In the month of May a Nor'Wester, spying through crevices of the logs, caught Robertson sealing up the bung in the whiskey keg. Swords and pistol in hand, the angry partners burst into the room with torrents of abuse that Robertson

Both Companies Make a Dash

was quite able to return. He was too dangerous a man to keep prisoner. The Nor'Westers decided to ship him out of the country on pain of assassination if he dared to return. No doubt Robertson smiled. His own coureurs had long since been sent speeding over prairie and swamp for Red River to warn the Hudson's Bay governor, Williams, to catch the Northwest fur brigade when the canoes would be running the rapids of the Saskatchewan in June.

Of the forty Nor'Westers conducting the June brigade to Montreal, half a dozen were directors. "I was embarked with Simon McGillivray," Robertson writes. "At Isle a la Crosse . . . seeing the strong rapids before us, I threw off my cloak as was my custom when running rapids. . . . What was my horror when I perceived our canoe swept out of its track into a shute over the rocks. . . . Our steersman shouted, 'My God, we are all lost.' . . . The canoe upset. . . . I attempted to swim ashore but the strong eddies drew me under the falls where I found Mr. Simon McGillivray and two or three others clinging to the gun'els of the canoe. . . . The canoe swept on down the current and Mr. Shaw, one of the partners, caught us below." What was almost an escape through an accident evidently suggested to Robertson's mind that it was not absolutely necessary he

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

should be deported out of the country against his will. At Cumberland House, where the brigade camped for a night, there was a Hudson's Bay as well as a Northwest post. Robertson asked leave to say good-by to his old friends, but no sooner was he inside the gates of the Hudson's Bay post than bolts were shot and every man of the ten inside the palisades, armed ready to fire if the Nor'Westers approached. "I have escaped," he writes, "but not agreeable to my feelings. . . . However my friends may applaud the act, my conscience tells me I have not done right in breaking my parole. . . . However, it is all over now. . . . At half past ten in the morning, the Northwest canoes pushed off from the beach without me."

Where the Saskatchewan empties into Lake Winnipeg are rough ledges of rock known as Grand Rapids. Here, it was usual to lighten loads, passengers landing to walk across the portage, the voyageurs running the canoes down full swirl to a camp below the rapids. Robertson knew that Williams, the Hudson's Bay governor from Red River, would be waiting for the Northwest brigade at this point. Barely had his captors' canoes paddled away from Cumberland House, when Robertson launched out on their trail far enough behind to escape notice, bound for the exciting rendezvous of Grand Rapids.

Both Companies Make a Dash

"In paddling along," he writes, "we were suddenly interrupted with a shout 'Canoe ahead!' . . . A shot was fired. . . . We arranged our pistols. The canoe was plainly approaching us. What shall be done? If these are enemies, the water is the safest place for defense. It was a moment of anxiety. As the canoe came nearer, a stranger stood up, waved his hat and shouted, 'Glorious news! Five North-West partners captured at Grand Rapids—Shaw, McIntosh, Campbell, McTavish and Frobisher taken! I am sent to meet Mr. Robertson!' We at once shaped our course to the canoe when our voyageurs struck up a song the men of both canoes yelling a cheer at each chorus." At eleven on the morning of July 30th, Robertson crossed the portage of Grand Rapids. He found himself in the midst of a stirring scene. Strung across the river at the foot of the rapids were barges mounted with swivels. On the bank lay the entire year's output of Athabasca furs, the poor French voyageurs huddling together, the loudest bully cowed; and apart from the camp in the windowless lodge of an old French hunter, were the captured Northwest partners surrounded by the guard of a hundred De Meuron soldiers under Governor Williams. This was a turning of the tables with a vengeance. As Williams blurted out in a gasconade striding forward to welcome

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Robertson, "two could play at the capturing business."

And a sorry thing "the capturing business" proved. Robertson does not give any details. He is evidently both ashamed of the episode and sorry; but the account is found in the journals of the Nor'Westers. Anxious to rescue Robertson, the Hudson's Bay governor had his barges strung across the river and his soldiers in ambush along the trail of the portage, when the unsuspecting Athabasca brigade, laden with furs to the water line, glided down the Saskatchewan. The canoes arrived in three detachments on the 18th, and 20th, and 30th of June. Rapids behind and pointed swivels before, the voyageurs were easy victims, surrendering to the soldiers at once. It was another matter with the partners. Both Hudson's Bay and Nor'Westers knew these lawless raids would be condemned by the courts; but each side also knew if it could capture and hold the other out of the Athabasca for a single year, the excluded rival would be ruined.

Frobisher and Campbell, accompanied by two servants, were the first partners to set out across the portage. Half way over, a movement in the grass caught their attention, and before they could speak they were surrounded by fifteen Hudson's Bay soldiers with pointed bayonets. Frobisher was a

Both Companies Make a Dash

man of enormous strength and violent temper. No Nor'Wester had exercised more wanton cruelty over Hudson's Bay captives than he. As he saw himself suddenly looking into the barrel of a Hudson's Bay gun, he had involuntarily knocked aside the muzzle and doubled his fist for a blow, when sharp bayonet prods in the small of his back sent him along the path at a run. The other partners as they came were captured in the same summary way. Cooped up in the hunter's lodge at the foot of the rapids, they demanded of Governor Williams his warrant for such proceedings.

"Warrant?" roared the Hudson's Bay governor. "What warrant had you when you held Robertson captive all last winter in Athabasca? What warrant had you for flogging Clarke out of the country two years ago? Talk to me of your Royal Proclamations of peace! I don't care a curse for your royal proclamations. I rely on the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company. Your governor of Canada is a d—— rascal! He is bribed by your Northwest gold! Warrants—indeed! Warrants are d—— nonsense in this country! Out of this country you go. I'll drive out every Nor'Wester or die in the attempt." In the midst of the tornado, some excitement arose from McIntosh, a Northwest partner, who was ill and had run the rapids with his canoemen, jumping

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

overboard and trying to swim ashore. Two Hudson's Bay canoemen pursued, caught him by the scruff of the neck and towed him ashore. Satisfied that he had captured all the partners in this brigade, Williams at once released the clerks and voyageurs with their cargoes of furs to proceed to Montreal. As the canoemen walked out of the hunter's cabin past the sentry, Frobisher beside himself with rage at the governor's rating—attempted to follow. He was clubbed to the ground. He hurled the full force of his herculean strength at his assailant. This time, the gun-stock struck him on the head. It is said from that moment he became so violently insane that he had to be kept under guard of two personal servants, Turcotte and Lepine. During the week that Williams waited at Grand Rapids for the coming of Robertson, the Northwest captives were kept on an island in midstream, forbidden even to leave their tent. One night, the partner McIntosh, succeeded in rolling himself out under the tent flap to the rear. Crawling to that side of the island farthest from the sentries, he bound two or three floating logs together in a raft and with a dead branch as a sweep, succeeded in escaping across the river. When he was missed in the morning, William, the Hudson's Bay governor, ordered his Indian scouts out "to take McIntosh dead or alive," but Indian friends faithfully concealed the

Both Companies Make a Dash

Nor'Wester. He was recaptured by force the next winter.

When Colin Robertson came down the Saskatchewan in his canoe on the 30th of June, instead of being a prisoner as he had expected, he was one of a party of one hundred and thirty Hudson's Bay men to conduct the captured Northwest partners across Lake Winnipeg to Norway House. Here, Robertson remained. Governor Williams took the prisoners on to York Factory on Hudson's Bay. The question was—what to do with the prisoners? At any cost, they must be kept out of Athabasca. That would effect the ruin of the Northwest Company in a year, but the Hudson's Bay Company would not thank Williams for landing them in any more lawsuits by illegal acts, and they could not be taken to Montreal. Shaw and Campbell and McTavish—the same McTavish who had sent Astor's men packing from the Columbia—were treated as prisoners of honor in the main house of York Fort at Hudson's Bay and allowed to exercise on the lead roof of the building. On the 30th of August came Franklin, the explorer, with letters of introduction to both Northwest and Hudson's Bay traders. It was suggested by Franklin that the Northwest partners be sent home to England by the boat that had brought him out. Shaw and McTavish sailed as steerage passengers.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Campbell chose to go down to the end of James Bay and overland to Canada, where the story of his adventures ran like wildfire; but the Hudson's Bay governor went back to the interior without leaving any instructions as to Frobisher. Either the Company would not forgive his cruel treatment of Hudson's Bay servants, or it was unsafe to release him in his violent condition. He was confined in a dilapidated outhouse where rain formed pools of water on the mud floor, with no protection against the cold but the clothes on his back and a three-point blanket. With him were the servants, Turcotte and Lepine. His violent ravings and maniacal struggles gradually gave place to a great depression. A servant of the fort took pity on the three prisoners and began smuggling extra rations at night through the iron-barred window.

From this time, Benjamin Frobisher planned a desperate escape, saving at the cost of physical strength food from their daily allowance for the inland voyage. His men expostulated. A voyage inland so late meant certain death. It was a pitch dark night on the 30th of September. Frobisher and his men broke gaol, coaxed the friendly Hudson's Bay man to give them three extra pairs of moccasins and mits, picked up an old fish net, with a piece of deerskin to act as tent, and clambered over

Both Companies Make a Dash

the palisades. Winter had set in early. The rain-swollen river was cold as ice, but in the three emaciated fugitives plunged, and swam to the far shore where there chanced to rock an old canoe. With the help of the tide, they made ten miles that night. Frobisher began to recover courage, singing wildly and paddling buoyant as a school boy, irresponsible as a maniac. Hudson's Bay fur brigades were still passing down the river. The three Nor'Westers passed these at night with muffled paddles, keeping to the far side of the stream. At intervals were abandoned hunter's cabins. Here, the three would take refuge for a night, leaving their net set in the river for fish. The pemmican saved from the allowance at the fort and the fish caught at night were the only food. By the 19th of October, they had passed the Hudson's Bay post, now called Oxford House, half way between Hudson Bay and the Saskatchewan. The nights now became bitterly cold, and there were no more old lodges—only a wind-break made of the canoe and the deerskin. Frobisher had become apparently quite sane, but provisions were running low, and he was visibly feebler each day.

The river here widened to a labyrinth of winding lakes, and the men kept losing themselves, missing in the blinding rains the poles stuck up here and

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

there to mark the way. They were wasting time, and it was a race against death. When they arose on October 23rd, six inches of snow lay on the ground, and shore ice was so thick they could not break it with their paddles. The canoe had to be left behind and the march continued by land. At the end of that week, there were only two pounds of pemmican left, and the men begged Frobisher to give himself up at the Hudson's Bay post of Norway House near Lake Winnipeg, but Frobisher bade them push on. There would be Indians at Lake Winnipeg. By a curious perversity of weather, a thaw now came, and they found themselves at Lake Winnipeg before open water without a canoe. Whether they waited here with an Indian camp until the ice would bear them, or followed the north shore of the lake on foot, cannot be told from Frobisher's disjointed journal. Their moccasins were worn to shreds, their feet bleeding, their only food the bit of deer-skin and tatters of buffalo hide stuck up on the bushes as trail marks by the Indians. Staggering through snow and water to their waists, tripped and tangled by windfall, losing themselves in the autumn storms, the three men were now barely conscious. About the third week of November, Frobisher could walk no farther, and the brave Half-breeds, who could have saved their own lives by deserting him

Both Companies Make a Dash

long ago, carried him by turns on their backs. Such conduct needs no comment. On the 20th of November, they were only two days from the first Northwest post on the Saskatchewan. With a last flickering gleam of reason, Frobisher realized the only hope was for the men to leave him and get help. "For God's sake," he penciled on a slip of paper, "lose not a moment to relieve me," and he ordered Turcotte and Lepine to carry this to the Northwest post on the Saskatchewan. They kindled fire for him and left him broiling a piece of the old deerskin for food; but the men were so feeble they made poor progress. It was four days before they reached the fort, having actually eaten their leather clothing and crawled the last day's travel. The two Half-breeds arrived delirious. It was three days more before messengers reached Frobisher's camp. His lifeless body was found lying across the ashes of the fire. So perished one of the founders of the Great Northwest Company—the victim of his own policy of lawless violence.

But a life more or less was not to stand in the way of the fur trade. The very next winter, Colin Robertson was back with the Hudson's Bay fur brigade on the Saskatchewan and Athabasca, pushing the traders over the mountains to the Pacific Coast. "Opponents have given us no trouble," he writes,

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

“but starvation nearly forced us to abandon the country. From November to February, I lived on dried berries and water with flour.” Letters record how at one post famine compelled the Hudson’s Bay men to surrender to the Nor’Westers; how at another, Black, “the Northwest bully,” was cud-gelled from his post by Hudson’s Bay partisans. So the merry play went on with these dare-devil gamesters of the wilderness till in the spring of 1820, bringing the fur brigade down the Saskatchewan, Robertson found the tables reversed. The gamesters were again playing with loaded dice. “The Nor’Westers have assembled to catch *us* at Grand Rapids,” he writes. “What defense can be expected from our sixty men worn down by hunger? This is returning the blow with a vengeance. . . . I told Mr. Miles, my assistant, all was not right at Grand Rapids. The governor was not there to protect our passing. . . . We hid the Company’s papers in a pemmican sack between beef and fat. If no scouts came back, either our spies were seized, or the Grand Rapids were clear and the passage free. . . . Passing a sleepless night, we embarked at daybreak, descended the current slowly, passed to the north bank . . . then asked my guide to run the rapids without the men disembarking. This he positively refused to do, saying he would not ven-

Both Companies Make a Dash

ture the rapids unless the men got out and each carried a pack to lighten the canoe. . . . So we began to cross the portage and had nearly reached the end when a large party of Half-breeds and Indians started from concealment, armed. . . . A Northwest agent snatched my gun . . . my men hesitated whether to come to the rescue, but I signalled them to be off and escape in the canoes."

The Nor'Wester who had captured Robertson, was the same J. D. Campbell captured at this very place and sent down to Hudson's Bay with Robertson's aid two years before. Fortunately, this Northwest partner was deadly tired of the policy of gasconading violence. He told Robertson frankly he must either sign an oath never to return to Athabasca, or go a prisoner to Montreal. "I gave the fellow one look of perfect contempt," writes Robertson. On his way down to Montreal, he succeeded in borrowing a few dollars from a friendly passer-by. At Wright's Farm, near the present city of Ottawa, the brigade was ordered to rest for some days. Robertson knew it was only to enable constables to come up from Montreal to arrest him. When the order was given to embark, he seized a biscuit (his enemies say a crow-bar) and hurling it in the face of the Northwest partner, leveled his pistol and dared the whole company to take him. The Northwesters did not

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

accept the challenge. They no doubt knew as Robertson says, "that most of the constables in Montreal were out after me." After a few days' rest at the way-side inn, the doughty Hudson's Bay fighter rode like mad for American territory, pausing only to change horses at Montreal. "The night was dark. The rain fell in torrents. A faithful friend rode before day and night all the way. . . . At three in the morning . . . we reached Plattsburg."

On the way to Montreal, Robertson had heard that the Nor'Westers were about to propose a union with the Hudson's Bay, and he judged that he could serve his Company best by hurrying to London and pressing on the General Court the fact that the country was already in the hands of the Hudson's Bay traders without any union. What was his amazement on taking ship at New York to find as fellow passengers two Northwest partners, Bethune and McLoughlin, now on the way to London to urge the union. "Hunting bees' wings in their champagne glasses," as Robertson describes their post-prandial talks, the two Nor'Westers actually asked Robertson to introduce them to the Hudson's Bay Company, but the feud lasted to the end of the voyage. "Wine went round freely and subscriptions were opened for the ship's hands," writes Robertson. "Our friend, the Nor'Wester, Dr. McLoughlin, had

Both Companies Make a Dash

put down his name. I took the pen to put mine down, but seeing Bethune, the other Nor'Wester, waiting, said to Abbé Carriere:

"'Come Abbé, put down your name. I don't want to sign between two Nor'Westers.'

"'Never mind, Robertson,' says the Abbé, 'Christ was crucified between two thieves.'

"McLoughlin flew in a dreadful passion, but being a good Catholic, had to stomach it."

As the world knows, the embassy of the Nor'-Westers was successful. The two companies were united, and the aforetime bitter rivals returned to serve the Hudson's Bay for many a year as faithful friends and loyal partners.

Over the united companies there was appointed as governor in America, George Simpson, who had been sent as clerk to Athabasca, quietly to observe the true state of affairs.

Notes on Chapter XXIX.—The contents of this chapter are taken from Robertson's letters to the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company—some two hundred foolscap pages (manuscript). Frobisher's death is given in the Masson Collection of N. W. C. Journals.

The terms of union of the two companies as given in the H. B. C. Minutes of March 20, 1821, were in brief as follows: Present at the General Court: Joseph Berens, Gov.; John Pelly, Deputy; Thos. Langlois, Benj. Harrison, Andrew Colville, Thomas Pitt, Nicholas Garry, Wm. Smith, Simon McGillivray, Edward Ellice, Jno. Liebenwood, Wm. Thwaytes, Robt. Whitehead, M. P. Lucas, Alex. Lean.

The Governor laid before the court draft of agreement proposed between the Adventurers of England on the one part and

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Wm. McGillivray, Simon McGillivray, Edward Ellice on the second part, in behalf of the N. W. C., by which deed it was agreed to unite the whole fur trade carried on into one concern from the first day of June next, the said H. B. C. and N. W. C. to find an equal share of capital and to divide the profits and losses for the term of 21 years. . . . £150,000 of the sd. joint stock apportioned among holders of H. B. C. stock in proportion to their respective interests, and £100,000 apportioned to the N. W. C.

Nicholas Garry was appointed to go out with Simpson and reorganize the united companies. With them as representing the N. W. C. went Simon McGillivray.

Most of the actors mentioned in the episodes of this chapter retired to become great nabobs in Montreal. The McGillivrays bought an estate in Scotland. Robertson served the H. B. C. for many years. John Clarke became a magnate of the Montreal aristocracy and was to be seen driving John Jacob Astor every time the American came to Montreal. Those men, who did not retire to Montreal, went to Red River or the Oregon. Among those going to the Columbia were: McLoughlin, Ogden, McKay, Ermatinger. Just as this volume went to press, the widow of John Clarke, who is still living at a very advanced age in Montreal, and her daughter, Miss Adele Clarke, issued a small brochure of recollections of the old days in Montreal—a rare little treatise with a flavor of old wine.

The gross sales of the H. B. C. from the time Athabasca was successfully invaded, ran up from £2,000 a year to £68,261.

The cost of Robertson's first Expedition to Athabasca is given in the minutes as £20,000—sheer loss.

George Simpson went out at a salary of £600, with £400 for traveling expenses. He was the first governor to enter Red River by way of Montreal.

It was in the winter of 1820-21 that Robertson and the Nor'Westers went to London. The company voted £1,000 to Robertson 21 Feb., 1821, as reward for his success, and granted him 21 shillings a day for expenses and £50 passage money back to Montreal.

PART IV

1821-1871

The Passing of the Company—McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, California—The Famous Mountain Brigades—How the Company Lost Oregon—Why the Chartered Monopoly Was Relinquished.

CHAPTER XXX

1821-1830

RECONSTRUCTION CONTINUED—NICHOLAS GARRY, THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR, COMES OUT TO REORGANIZE THE UNITED COMPANIES—MORE COLONISTS FROM SWITZERLAND—THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BRIGADES—ROSS OF OKANOGAN.

IT FELL to Nicholas Garry to come out and reorganize the united traders, because he chanced to be the only unmarried man on the Governing Committee. The task was not easy. Bitter hatreds must be harmonized. Indians must be conciliated. Fire-eaters must be transferred to new districts, where old animosities would be unknown. Williams, the swashbuckler governor, must be replaced by George Simpson, the tactful man of business. Necessarily, a great many officers must be displaced altogether from both the old Companies.

It was not desirable that Garry should come out with active partisans of either Company. Bethune and Simon McGillivray and Doctor McLoughlin—the Nor'Westers—and Colin Robertson, the Hudson's Bay man, all arrived at Montreal by different routes and took passage to Fort William by different

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

canoes. So eager were the partisans, Garry was met in New York by such well-known Nor'Westers as Judge Ogden, and such well-known Hudson's Bay agents as Auddjo, the Company's lawyer. Leaving Montreal, Garry proceeded up the Ottawa in a canoe followed by Robertson and Simon McGillivray—all bound for Fort William, where the partners would sign the deed of union and Garry re-arrange the positions of the officers. At Long Sault the canoes passed the house of Red River's first governor—Miles MacDonell—now mentally a wreck from the terrible struggle. Frobisher dead of starvation, Selkirk of a broken heart, Sir Alexander MacKenzie of ills contracted through exposure in the wilds, Miles MacDonell out of his mind—men of both sides had paid a deadly toll for mistakes and wrongs. Ottawa City when Garry passed West, in 1821, consisted solely of Wright's farm at Hull. At the Sault was David Thompson, surveying boundaries for the government. Then Garry's canoe landed him safely at Fort William, where the deed of union was signed that extinguished the lawless glory of that famous place. Then with partners assembled, old enemies glaring at each other across the table, the tactful George Simpson doing his best to help to suppress the ill-concealed hatred of former rivals, both sides proceeded to distribute the officers.

"The comfortable districts were set aside for friends of the N. W. C.," declared the discontented Robertson, failing to see that his very loyalty to the old Company stood in the way of his promotion. "It never occurred to the new concern that such men as John Clarke and Colin Robertson were in existence. One cannot but admire the staunchness of these old Northwest partners. They are parting from life-long friends. The N. W. C. have gained a complete victory for the best places. John George McTavish becomes superintendent of York. McLoughlin goes to the Columbia. I am to have Norway House. Mr. John Clarke, full of health and vigor, was represented as compelled to go to Montreal for his health for a time. Mr. Simpson, the new governor, who did such good work in Athabasca as clerk, felt a good deal hurt at the way Mr. Garry made the appointments. Simon McGillivray lost his temper again and again. Mr. Simpson is one of the most pleasant little men I have ever met. He is full of spirit, can see no difficulties and is ambition itself. He requires bridle more than spur."

Appointments having been made, Garry proceeds west, pausing at Rainy Lake, at Winnipeg River and at Red River to meet the Indians in treaty and hear Simon McGillivray assure them they must now all obey the Hudson's Bay Company. At all trading

places the fur posts are combined in one palisaded fort. At Red River, so bitter is the feeling, Garry decides both Hudson's Bay and Northwest forts must be abandoned and a new one built slightly back from the forks of the river. This is named after himself—Fort Garry. Ten years have passed since Selkirk sent his first colonists to Red River, and Garry finds that the settlement numbers two hundred and twenty-one Scotch people on the west side of Red River; sixty-five De Meuron soldiers, who remained as farmers, on the east side of Red River, and one hundred and thirty-three retired Canadian fur traders. Of the four hundred and nineteen people, only one hundred and fifty-four are women. The De Meurons are dissatisfied. They will not marry Indian wives, and no others are to be had, so the De Meurons grow tired of their homeless, wifeless cabins and become somewhat noted in Kildonan for tavern brawls and midnight raids on the hen roosts. Also, cattle mysteriously disappear, of which the De Meurons offer the hides for sale.

Garry then hastens from Lake Winnipeg to York on Hudson Bay to meet the incoming ships and return on one of them to England. He is just in time at York to meet one hundred and seventy Swiss settlers brought out by Walter von Husser, a Swiss nobleman. Garry foresees exactly what afterward happens.

Here are wives for the De Meuron soldiers, but he fears these comely Swiss girls will fare badly with "the lawless banditti De Meurons." Garry's fears were not realized. The West has a wonderful way of raising the status of women through sheer scarcity of femininity. The De Meurons were so glad to see the Swiss that the emigrants were welcomed to the soldiers' lodges for the winter. But in another way the Swiss settlers did not fare well. They were nearly all artisans, unused to farming—clockmakers and cabinet workers and carvers, who found small service for their labors on Red River. The consequence was the majority abandoned Red River and moved down to Minnesota, squatting near the newly built military post—Fort Snelling, near what is now St. Paul. Thus Selkirk—all unwitting—had builded better than he dreamed—laying the foundation colonies of two western empires; for these Swiss were the first settlers in Minnesota, as distinguished from mere fur traders. St. Paul, it may be added, was in those days known as "Pig's Eye," from the uncanny countenance of a disreputable whiskey dealer there.

Let us follow some of the newly organized brigades to their hunting fields. John McLoughlin has been sent to Oregon. Born on October 19, 1784, at

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Riviere de Loup, on the St. Lawrence, six feet three in stature, the doctor is comparatively a young man to rule the vast empire beyond the mountains, but exposure has given him an appearance of premature age, of premature gentleness. His long hair, white as snow, wins him the name among the Indians of "White Eagle," and his manners have the benign pomp of a man sure of himself. Douglas of Stuart Lake, who has been with Fraser, accompanies him as second. A Doctor Barclay goes as physician. Tom McKay, McLoughlin's stepson, son of the McKay of the MacKenzie voyages, is leader of the brigades. Scattered at the different forts, at Colville and Walla Walla and Okanogan, are many of Astor's old men, many of David Thompson's old brigades. When the war of 1812 closed, by treaty of 1818 Fort George is restored to the Americans; but there are no Americans on the field. The Nor'Westers continue at the fort till Governor Simpson and Dr. John McLoughlin come in 1824-5, and to avoid the baleful effects of skippers' rum from passing ships, move headquarters up the Columbia on the north side opposite Willamette River, some ninety or one hundred miles from the sea. The new fort is called Vancouver. While treaty has restored Fort George to the Americans, it has not restored Oregon. Oregon is in dispute. For the present, England and



Sir James Douglas, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in
British Columbia.

the United States agree "to joint occupancy," the treaty in no way to affect the final question of ownership.

If Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Switzerland were united under one flag, if that flag had the motto *Pro Pelle Cutem*—"Skin for Skin"—and the mystic letters H. B. C.—Hudson's Bay Company—it would give some idea of the size of the fur traders' kingdom ruled by McLoughlin. At a bend in the Columbia on the north side, far enough from the coast to be away from the rivalry of Pacific schooners, near enough to be in touch with tidewater, stood the capital of the kingdom, Fort Vancouver. Spruce slabs half a foot thick, twenty feet high, sharp at both ends and in double rows, composed the walls. Great gates with brass hinges extending half way across the top and bottom beams, opened leaf-wise toward the river. On the northwest corner stood a bastion whose lower stories served as powder magazine and upper windows as look-out. Cannon bristled through the double palisades of the fort, and to one side of the main gate was the customary wicket through which goods could be exchanged for furs from the Indians. The big, two-story, timbered house in the center of the court was the residence of the Chief Factor. On both sides were stores

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

and warehouses and fur presses and the bachelors' quarters and the little log cabins, where lived the married trappers. Trim lawns decorated with little rockeries of cannon balls divided the different buildings, and in front of the Chief Factor's residence on the top of a large flagpole there blew to the breeze the flag with the letters H. B. C.—sign that a brigade was coming in, or a brigade setting out; or a ship had been sighted; or it was Sunday and the flying flag was signal to the Indians there would be no trade, a flag custom on Sundays that has lasted to this day.

At the mouth of the Columbia, all that remained of Astor's Fort Astoria and Lewis and Clarke's Fort Clatsop was a moldering pile of rain-rotted logs with a little square-timbered hut where one lone Scotchman kept watch for incoming ships and possible wrecks. Eastward, where the Columbia takes its first bend was Walla Walla, under trader Pambrum; northward, where it takes a second bend, Okanogan under Ross; west, where it turns up into the Arrow Lakes of British Columbia, Fort Colville under Firman MacDonell; and half way between these two posts southward, Spokane House, founded by that John Clarke, who was with Robertson in Athabasca. These were the strongholds from which the Company ruled its transmontane kingdom, five

little fur posts, all except Spokane, close to the main river trail, the capitals and sub-capitals of an empire big as half Europe.

By right, the treaty of joint occupation had reference only to Washington and Oregon; but who was to prevent McLeod leading his brigade down the coast to California as far as Sacramento, or Ogden his brigade up the Snake as far as the Nevada deserts, or Ross his mountaineers through Washington and Idaho over the Bitter Root and Rocky Mountains to the buffalo plains of the Missouri in Montana? It was a no-man's-land, where trappers might wander whither their beaver quest led, with no other law but what each man's right arm was strong enough to enforce. Fish diet palled at Fort Vancouver. Buffalo meat was needed for the brigades. Up at Fort Okanogan was Alexander Ross, studying the language of the mountain Indians, leading a lonely existence "with no other company," as he relates, "but my dog Weasel and the Bible." A mid-winter express brought Ross orders to proceed over the mountains by way of Clarke's Fork or Flathead River to the headwaters of the Missouri and Yellowstone and Big Horn. His hunting field was the very stamping ground of the most dangerous warriors among the Indians—the Blackfeet and Piegans and Crows. Yet if this express had ordered Ross to

march down to Hell's Gate and jump over the precipice into that cañon, he would have obeyed. A better man for the field could not have been chosen. Ross had come to the Pacific on John Jacob Astor's first ship. He had been almost at once sent North to establish Fort Okanogan, where by studying the Indian languages during the long isolated winters, he soon became a proficient trader. He was both religious and scholarly, but either the intense loneliness of the life, or the danger of being among the Indians without a companion, drove him into marriage with a daughter of the Okanogans. This wife became one of the grand old ladies of the Red River Settlement, when Ross retired to Manitoba. Beaver must be sought as usual at the headwaters of the Missouri and the Yellowstone and the Big Horn; and to reach those headwaters for the spring hunt, Ross must do his buffalo hunting in mid-winter. The mountain passes must be traversed through bottomless depths of snow, for the climate was so mild no crust formed, and above the tree line in the cloud region was a fall—fall of snow almost continuous for the winter months till the precipices overhung with dangerous snow cornices of ponderous weight, and the cut-rocks were heaped into huge snow mushrooms. But Ross was no novice at snow work in the mountains. One of his first winters at

Okanogan, he had become so desperately lonely that he decided to pay a three days' visit to his next door neighbor at Spokane House, one hundred and fifty miles away. The country was rocky and the trail steep. Coming home the horses had fagged so completely climbing the last mountain that Ross and his Indian servants dismounted to beat the way up through the snow for the animals to follow. It was not easy work. Snow cornice broke under the weight, and down men and horses slithered in miniature avalanche. The soft crust of drift over rocks broke, plunging the path-makers in snow to their armpits, and all the while the way was zigzagging up till Ross and his Indians were blowing with heat like whales. First, pack straps came off, then gun cases, then coats and waistcoats to be hung on the saddle pommels. A sharp turn in the trail brought them suddenly on one of those high, bare Alpine meadows where Arctic storms sweep when flowers may be blooming in the valley. Before they could find their horses darkness and snow so completely hid everything Ross could only shout against the wind for the men to shift for themselves and let the horses run. Then he realized that he was without either coat or buffalo blanket. Luckily, a bewildered pack horse jammed against him in the whirl. Ross gripped the saddle straps, cut the pack ropes, threw

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

off the load, and leaped astride the saddle trees with no other blanket than the patch of wool that served as saddle cloth. Certain that he was near Okanogan, he rode like mad through the howling darkness, but the floundering broncho fagged in the drifts, and Ross became so numb he could not keep his seat. Dismounting, he tried to keep himself warm by walking, but was soon so exhausted he could only cling to the warm body of the horse. Tying the saddle cloth round his neck, he tried to dig a hole of shelter in the snow, but there, his feet became so cold, he had to take off his boots to keep from freezing, and passed the night in a frantic effort against the frost-sleep. In the morning he was too stiff to mount his horse. He had no strength to beat the wind, and had almost determined to kill his horse and crawl inside the body, when the storm began to lessen. To his relief, Okanogan House was only a short distance away. When trappers went out to rescue the Indians of the party, they found one horse dead, torn to pieces by the wolves. Ross knew mountain travel.

It was February 11, 1824, when Ross struck east from Cœur d'Alene Lake—the Lake of the Pointed Heart, so called from the sharp trading, like “an awl” of the Indians—to cross the mountains of Idaho and Montana for the buffalo plains. Between

Okanogan and Spokane House, he had succeeded in mustering twelve Hudson's Bay trappers, Iroquois most of them, with a few Canadians like Pierre and Goddin and Sylvaile. Of the freeman who roved the mountains, forty-three joined Ross' brigade. In all, there were forty-five men, two hundred and six traps, sixty-two guns, including a large brass cannon, and two hundred and thirty horses. In a few days they were on Horse Prairie, where roved herds of wild, Spanish ponies, claimed by the Flatheads and valued at four beaver skins each. Passing travelers might seize these horses, but woe betide them if full value were not left in beaver skins. Without warning, the Flatheads would pursue and exact a scalp for each horse stolen. From the outset Ross had trouble with his men. They had first served under Astor, then under the Nor'Westers, and now were unsettled by the recent change of allegiance to Hudson's Bay. Besides, General Ashley's mountaineers, Pierre Chouteau's trappers, had begun coming across the plains from St. Louis. For each beaver the American trader paid \$5.00, where the Hudson's Bay paid only \$1.00 and \$2.00. Ross' trappers were dissatisfied. For the first month—the mid-winter month when all game is quiet—no beaver were seen. Snow storms met the marchers as they neared the mountains, and on the 13th of

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

February Ross awakened to find that the Iroquois hunters under old Pierre had deserted. Mounting post haste, Ross pursued, overtook the seceders, and demanded the cause of their complaint. They complained that the price allowed for their furs was so small in proportion to the exorbitant advance on goods, that they were never able to pay debts, much less make money, and declared they would not risk their lives any more. Ross, himself, acknowledges that goods worth six pence were traded for beaver worth \$5.00 in China. "The Iroquois declared Mr. Ogden last fall had promised they should be paid half in currency. I told them that promise would be performed. They grumbled and talked, and talked and grumbled, and at last consented to proceed. Thinks I to myself—is *this* the beginning?" Four days later, the first beaver was caught, but only the toes were left in the trap. Wolves had howled all night round the camp. To avoid future mutiny, Ross appointed three leaders, old Pierre at the head of the Iroquois; Montour of the Half-breeds and himself for the Company's trappers, the three to meet each night and exchange the views of the camp. On February 23rd, the brigade struck into that defile of the mountains between the Rockies east and the Bitter Root west, along the trail from what is now from Butte and Missoula to De Smet

Reconstruction Continued

and Kootenay. They had left Clarke's Fork and were on Hell Gate River, "so named," explains Ross, "from being frequented by war parties of roving Blackfeet." While the brigade camped came a tinkle of dog bells over the snow, and eight Piegans appeared driving loaded dog sleds with provisions to trade in the Flathead country. Before Ross could stop them, his rascally Iroquois were out of the leather lodges with a whoop and flare of firearms and had stripped the poor Piegans naked, leaving not so much as a piece of fat on their sleighs. There was nothing for Ross to do but "pay treble the value of the trash" and invite the victims into his own lodge. As the Piegans were going off next day, he gave them a salute of honor from the brass gun, "*just to show them,*" he explains, "*that it makes a noise.*" Barely was this trouble past, when two Iroquois again deserted. After them on horseback rode Ross with old Pierre as lieutenant. "Partly by persuasion, and partly by force," he relates, "we put them on horseback and brought them into camp before dark."

It was necessary to reach the buffalo plains and get the store of pemmican before the spring hunt. Already it was March, and Ross found himself in a narrow mountain cañon three hundred miles from any post, the trail forward blocked by snow twelve

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

feet deep for twenty miles. No time for mutineers to plot. Daydawn to dark for a week, Ross sent his men forward to cut a way through the snow, the horses disappearing through the soft drifts altogether in their plunges, and the end of a week saw only three miles clear with a howling blizzard that filled up the trench as fast as the trappers could work. Ross kept his men too busy to think of turning back and sent forward a fresh relay of horses to stamp the way open. The end of another week saw eight miles clear, but storm kept the men idle in camp for a day, and that day worked the mischief with discipline. "John Grey, a turbulent Iroquois, came to my lodge as spokesman to inform me he and ten others had resolved to turn back. I asked him *why*? He said this delay would lose the spring hunt. Anyway, the Iroquois had not engaged to dig snow and make roads. I told him I was surprised to hear a good, quiet, honest fellow like he was utter such cowardly words. (God forgive me for the lie!) I said by going back they would loose the whole year's hunt. A change in the weather any day now might allow us to begin hunting. It was dangerous for us to separate. John answered he was no slave to work in this way. I told him he was a freeman of good character and to be careful to keep his character good. (God forgive me. In my heart, I thought

Reconstruction Continued

otherwise. I saw him in his true colors, a turbulent blackguard, a d—— rascal, a low trouble maker.) He said: 'Fair words are all very well; but back I am going to go.' I thought a moment. Then I said: 'You are no stronger than other men. Stopped, you will be. I will stop you!' He said he would like to see the man who could stop him. I said: 'I can.' Old Pierre interrupted by coming in and John went off cursing the Company, the brigade, the country, the day he came to it. If his party deserts, this trip will fail. So another day ends."

The next day, not a soul would go to work. With the storm howling round the tepee as if it would tear the buffalo flaps away, the solitary white man sitting by the fire inside the lodge, knew the mutiny was spreading. Up and down the cañon roared the blizzard, booming down from the mountains for almost a week, the bitter North wind drifting, piling, packing in a wall of snow from end to end of the eight-mile trench that had been cleared. Watching the smoke curl up from the central fire to the tepee top, Ross though alone, could afford to smile. With that wall of snow behind, it would be just as hard to go back as to go forward. The storm was cutting off the mutineers' retreat. That night as the fires were smoldering and the hobbled bronchos huddling about the lodge walls for shelter from the wind, a

furious barking of dogs aroused camp and the shout of "enemies, enemies, Blackfeet," brought the trappers dashing out muskets in hand. The fire inside a tepee is too good a target for attack. Outside, even in storm is safer, but the snow muffled forms emerging from the wooly darkness proved to be no enemies at all, but six friendly Nez Percés, who had come from the buffalo hunt across the mountains on snowshoes. Five days the journey had taken. They reported buffalo in plenty but the snow deeper farther down the cañon. Taking advantage of the diversion created, Ross sent for John, the mutineer, and offered to reduce his debt to the Company "if the intriguing scamp would hunt the hills for game to keep the camp in meat." John disposed of, Ross called for thirty volunteers to go back over the mountain on snowshoes with the Nez Percés to the buffalo hunt. With thirty men across the mountains, there was no danger of the rest turning back. Storm was followed by thaw, that increased the pasturage for the horses, and sent the Indian women picking cranberries in the marshes, and set the snow-slides rumbling down the mountains like thunder. Birds were singing in the cañon, geese winging north overhead, but still the snow lay packed like a wedge in the pass, barring way for horses or cannon. "I feel anxious, very anxious at our long delay here," writes

Ross at the end of a month. "The people grumble much. That sly, deep dog of an Iroquois, Laurent, deserted camp to-day before I knew. A more head-strong, ill-designing set of rascals than form this camp, God never permitted together in the fur trade." In a few weeks the buffalo hunters were back with store of meat, which the squaws began to pound into pemmican; but the sun glare had been so strong on the unsheltered slopes of the uplands that six of the hunters were led home snow-blind. This discouraged the freemen, fickle as children; and rebellion began to brew again. In vain, Ross called a council, and went from lodge to lodge, and urged, and ordered, and pleaded, and bribed. Not a man but Old Pierre, the Iroquois, would go to work to clear the road.

The nights were spent in gambling, the days in grumbling; and old Cadiac, a Half-breed, had made himself an Indian drum or tom-tom of buffalo skin stretched on bare hoops. John Grey, the rebel, had uncased his fiddle and was filing away all night to the Red River jig and native dances of Indian pow-wow. Ross proposed the camp should give a concert. A concert meant that a dram of liquor would go the rounds. Two or three lodges were thrown into one. Vanished into thin air the mutinous mood of the rebels. Hither came Cadiac with the tom-tom-

tom of the Indian drum! Hither John Grey, the Iroquois, scraping his fiddle strings with the glee of a Troubadour! Hither Half-breeds with concertinas, and shaggy hunters with Jews' harps, and French Canadians with a fife! The night was danced away with such wild Western jigs as Hell Gate had never seen before and did not see again till the mountains resounded to the music halls of the tin-horn gamblers in the construction days of the railway. When morning came over the hills, Ross sprung his surprise. Whether the surprise was mixed with what cheered the French half-breeds' inner man—he does not tell. With a whoop and hurrah, he proposed they all go down the pass and dig that snow out to the strains of John Grey's fiddle! The sun was coming over the mountains. The hunters were happy as grown-up children. What did the old snow matter anyway? Off they went! John Grey, the arch-rebel, literally fiddling them through the mountains! But alas, four days later, when the novelty or spree had worn off, on the morning of April 14th, every man of the camp except seven, refused to go to work. However, it was the last mile of the blockade, and those seven cleared the way. "Thursday, April 15th. This day we passed the defile of the mountains after a most laborious journey both for man and beast. Long before daylight we were on the road, in order

to profit by the hardness of the crust before the thaw. From the bottom to the top of the mountains is about one and a half miles. On the one side is the source of the Flathead River, on the other of the Missouri. The latter creek runs south-southeast through the mountains till it joins a branch of the Missouri beyond Grand Prairie. For twelve miles, the road had been made through five feet of snow, but the wind had filled it up again. The last eight miles we had to force our way through snow gullies, swimming the horses through in plunges. At four P. M. we encamped on the other side of the defile without accident. Distance to-day eighteen miles, though only a mile and a half as the crow flies. This delay has cost loss of one month. We encamp to make lodge poles for the rest of the journey."

From the journals sent in by Ross to Hudson's Bay House, it is hard to follow the exact itinerary of his movements for the next two months. Nor do the books, which he wrote of his life in the West, throw much light on the *locale* of his travels. Wherever there were beaver and buffalo, the brigade marched. One week, the men were spread out in different parties on the Three Forks of the Missouri. Another week, they were on the headwaters of the Yellowstone in the National Park of Wyoming. They did not go eastward beyond sight of the moun-

tains, but swung back and forward between Montana and Wyoming. "Saturday—April 17th—proceeded to the main fork of the Missouri and set watch. It was on this flat prairie, four hundred Piegans last year attacked Firman McDonald's brigade and killed a freeman named Thomas Anderson. As we are on dangerous ground, I have drawn up the following rules: (1) All hands raise camp together by call; (2) The camp to march close together. (3) No person to run ahead; (4) No person to set traps till all hands are camped; (5) No person to sleep out of camp. All agreed to these rules, but they were broken before night. Thursday, 22nd of April—thirty-five beaver taken last night, six feet left in the traps, twenty-five traps missing (dragged off by the beaver or stolen by the Indians). The freemen let their horses run. They will not take care of them." And then poor Ross varies the formalities of his daily report by breaking out in these lines against his unruly followers:

"Loss and misfortune must be the lot
When care and attention are wholly forgot."

"That scamp of a Saulteaux Indian threatens to leave because I found fault with him for breaking the rules. If he dares, I will strip him naked, horses, blankets and clothes, to fare forth on the plain. Saturday 24th—We crossed beyond the Boiling

Fountains. The snow is knee-deep. Half the people are snow-blind from sun glare."

Ross now swung west over the Bitter Root Mountains to Salmon River, following as far as I can tell, the path of the modern Oregon Short Line Railway from Salt Lake to the Northern Pacific. So has it always been in America. Not the bridge builder but the fur trader has been the pathfinder for the railway. On leaving the middle fork of the Missouri, he refers to one of those wilderness tragedies of which word comes down to latter day life like a ghost echo of some primordial warfare. "Passed a deserted Piegan camp of thirty-six lodges rendered immemorial as the place where ten Piegan murderers of our people were burnt to death. The road through the mountains from the Missouri to Salmon River is a Blackfoot Pass of a most dangerous sort for lurking enemies; and yet the freemen insist on going out in twos and twos. Three people slept out of camp by their traps. I had to threaten not to give a single ball to them if they did not obey rules; fifty-five beaver to-day."

Ross now scattered his trappers from the valley of the Three Tetons north along the tributaries of the Snake in Idaho. One Sunday night—Ross always compelled his trappers to dress for Sunday and hold prayers—two French Canadian freemen

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

ran into camp with moccasins torn to shreds and a breathless story. Contrary to rules, they had wandered in quest of game forty miles away, sleeping wherever night found them, with no food but what they carried in a blanket on their backs. "On their way to our camp, they saw a smoke, and taking it for our people had advanced within pistol shot when behold, it proved to be a camp of Piegans. Wheeling, they had hardly time to take shelter among a few willows, when they were surrounded by armed warriors on horseback. Placing their own horses between themselves and the enemy, our two men squatted on the grass to conceal themselves. The Piegans advanced within five paces, capering and yelling, cock sure of their prey. The women had gathered to act a willing part, armed with lances. The two crept through mud and water out of sight and when night came escaped, abandoning horses, saddles, traps and all. They had traveled on foot after dark the entire distance, hiding by day."

By June, Ross had a thousand beaver; but the Piegans had followed up the trail of the two escaping men. "Saturday, 19th—Had a fight. This morning when all hands were at their traps scattered by twos, and only ten men left in the camp, forty Blackfeet all mounted, descended on us at full speed. The trappers were so scattered, they could render

each other no assistance and took to their heels among the brushwood, throwing beaver one way, traps another. Jacques and John Grey were pursued on the open plain. Seeing their horses could not save them, our two heroes wheeled and rode pell mell into the enemy. The Piegans asked them to exchange guns. They refused. The chief seized Jacques' rifle, but Jacques jerked it free, saying in Piegan: 'If you wish to kill us, kill us at once; but our guns you shall never get while we are alive.' The Piegans smiled, shook hands, asked where the camp was, and ordered the men to lead the way to it. With pulses beating, Jacques and John advanced with the unwelcome guests to the camp, a distance of eight miles. A little before arriving, Jacques broke away at full speed from his captors whooping and yelling—'Blackfeet! Blackfeet!' In an instant, camp was in an uproar. Of the ten men in camp, eight rushed to save the horses. Myself and the other instantly pointed the big gun, lighted the match and sent the women away. The party hove in sight. Seeing John with them, restrained me from firing. I signaled them to pause. Our horses were then secured. I received the Indians coldly. All our people had time to reach camp and take up a position of defense. I invited the Indians to smoke. After dark, they entertained us to music and dancing,

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

which we would gladly have dispensed with. All slept armed. In the morning I gave the Piegans presents and told them to be off and play no tricks as we would follow them and punish them. The big gun did it. Sixty-five beaver to-day."

Moving down Snake River in October, Ross met a party of Americans from the Big Horn from Major Henry's brigade of St. Louis. They had nine hundred beaver but would not sell to Ross. Ross reached Spokane House with about \$18,000 of fur in November. Here he helped to fit out Peter Skene Ogden for that first trip of his to the Snake Country, of which there is no record except what Ross gives here. He says Ogden set out with one hundred and seventy-six men under him, and definitely counted on collecting 14,500 beaver. No doubt the St. Louis trappers that Ross left on the Snake were the men, who "relieved" Peter Skene of his furs, and it is interesting to note that at the price St. Louis traders paid for furs, \$5.50 a beaver, those 14,500 Hudson's Bay beaver would make the exact amount with which General Ashley retired from the Indian Country.

Notes to Chapter XXX.—The contents of this chapter are drawn (1) as to reorganization from Colin Robertson's manuscript journal and Nicholas Garry's Journal; (2) as to the Columbia, from Ross' manuscript journals sent to H. B. C. House, London. Ross was the author of three well-known books on western life, but this journey is taken entire from his official report to H. B. C.—a daily record of some six hundred foolscap folios.

CHAPTER XXXI

1824-1838

JOURNALS OF PETER SKENE OGDEN, EXPLORER AND FUR TRADER, OVER THE REGIONS NOW KNOWN AS WASHINGTON, OREGON, CALIFORNIA, IDAHO, MONTANA, NEVADA AND UTAH—HE RELIEVES ASHLEY'S MEN OF 10,000 BEAVER—HE FINDS NEVADA—HE DISCOVERS MT. SHASTA—HE TRICKS THE AMERICANS AT SALT LAKE.

GAY were the fur brigades that swept out from old Fort Vancouver for the South. With long white hair streaming to the wind, Doctor McLoughlin usually stood on the green slope outside the picketed walls, giving a personal hand-shake, a personal God-bless-you to every packer, every horseman of the motley throng setting out on the yearly campaign for beaver. There were Iroquois from the St. Lawrence. There were Ojibways from Lake Superior. There were Cree and Assiniboine and Sioux of the prairie, these for the most part to act as packers and hunters and trappers in the horse brigades destined inland for the mountains. Then, there were freemen, a distinct body of trappers owning allegiance to no man, but joining the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Company's brigades for safety's sake and selling the beaver they trapped to the trader who paid the highest price. Of coast Indians, there were very few. The salmon runs of the river gave the coast tribes too easy an existence. They were useless for the hardships of inland service. A few Cayuses and Flatheads, and Walla Wallas might join the brigades for the adventure, but they did not belong to the Company's regular retainers.

Three classes, the Company divided each of the hunting brigades into—gentlemen, white men, hunters. The gentlemen usually went out in twos—a commander and his lieutenant, dressed in cocked hat and buttons and ruffles and satin waistcoats, with a pistol somewhere and very often a sword stuck in the high boot-leg. These were given the best places in the canoes, or mounted the finest horses of the mountain brigades. The second class were either servants to beat the furs and cook meals, or young clerks sent out to be put in training for some future chieftaincy. But by far the most picturesque part of the brigades were the motley hunters—Indians, Half-breeds, white men—in buckskin suits with hawks' bills down the leggings, scarlet or blue handkerchief binding back the lank hair, bright sash about the waist and moccasins beaded like works of art. Then somewhere in each brigade was

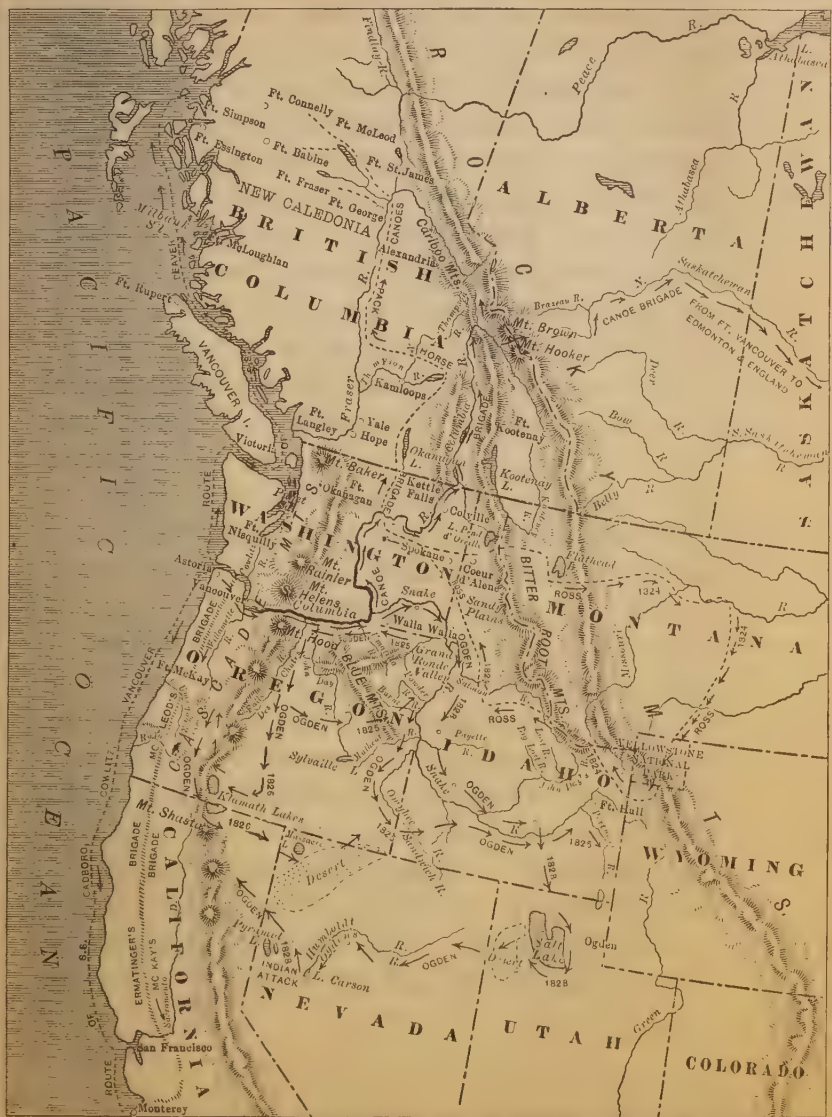
a musician, a singer to lead in the voyageurs' songs, perhaps a piper from the Highlands of Scotland to set the bagpipes droning "The Campbells Are Coming," between the rock walls of the Columbia. And, most amazing thing of all, in these transmontane brigades the men were accompanied by wives and families.

A last hand shake with Doctor McLoughlin; tears mingled with fears over partings that were many of them destined to be forever, and out they swept—the Oregon brigades, with laughter and French voyageurs' song and Highland bagpipes. A dip of the steersman's lifted paddle, and the Northern brigades of sixty men each were off for Athabasca and the Saskatchewan and the St. Lawrence. A bugle call, or the beat of an Indian tom-tom, and the long lines of pack horses, two and three hundred in each brigade, decked with ribbons as for a country fair, wound into the mountain defiles like desert caravans of wandering Arabs. Oregon meant more in those days than a wedge stuck in between Washington and California. It was everything west of the Rockies that Spain did not claim. Then Chief factor McLoughlin, whom popular imagination regarded as not having a soul above a beaver skin, used to retire to his fort and offer up prayer for those in peril by land and sea.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

The man chosen to lead the southern brigades to the mountains and whose wanderings led to the exploration of Oregon, northern California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada and Utah—was a short rotund, fun-loving, young barrister of Montreal, Peter Skene Ogden. His ancestors had founded Ogdensburg of New York State and at an earlier day in the history of Scotland had won the surname “Skene,” through saving the life of King Malcolm by stabbing a wolf with a dagger—“a skene.” During the American Revolution, his father left New York for Montreal, and had risen to be chief justice of the courts there, so that the young barrister could claim as relatives the foremost families of New York State and the Province of Quebec; but an evil star presided at the birth of Peter Skene.

He was finishing his law course when his boyhood voice changed, and instead of the round orotund of manhood came a little, high, falsetto squeak that combined with Peter’s little, fat figure and round head proved so irresistibly comical, it blasted his hopes as a pleader at the bar. John Jacob Astor was in Montreal wrangling out his quarrel over Mississippi territory with the Northwest Company. Judge Ogden was a friend of Astor’s. Peter applied to go out to Astoria on the Pacific. Astor took him as supercargo on *The Lark*; but in 1813, *The Lark*



OGDEN AND ROSS EXPLORATIONS

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

was wrecked in a squall two hundred miles off the Sandwich Islands, and young Ogden was of those who, lashed to the spars of the drifting wreck, fell to the mercies of the Hawaiians, and finally reached Astoria only to find it captured by the Northwest Company. That was his introduction to the fur trade of Oregon, and it was typical. McLoughlin had no sooner moved headquarters from Astoria inland to Fort Vancouver, than Peter Skene was sent to the Flatheads of the West. Here, one of his servants got into a scuffle with the Indians over a horse, and Ogden was carried to the Flathead chief to be shot.

“What?” he demanded of the astonished chief. “Do you think a white man is to be bullied over a horse? Do you think a white man fears to be shot? Shoot,” and he bared his breast to the pistol point.

But the Flathead chief did not shoot. “He brave man,” said the chief, and he forthwith invited Ogden to remain in the tent as a friend, and proposed another way out of the quarrel that would be of mutual benefit to the Company and to the Flatheads. The Company wanted furs; the Flatheads, arms. Let Ogden marry the chief’s daughter—Julia Mary. It was not such a union as his relatives of New York would approve, or his father, the chief justice of Montreal. She was not like the young ladies he

had known in the seminaries of the East, but her accomplishments were of more use to Peter Ogden. When Peter Skene walked out of the Flatheads' tent, he had paid fifty ponies for a wife and was followed by the chief's daughter. To what period of his life they belong, I do not know. His own journals tell nothing of them, but legends are still current in the West about this Flathead princess of the wilds; how when a spring torrent would have swept away a raft-load of furs, Julia leaped into the flood tide, roped the raft to her own waist, and towed the furs ashore; how when the American traders, who relieved Ogden of his furs, in 1825, stampeded the Hudson's Bay horses and Julia's horse galloped off with her first-born dangling from the saddle straps in a moss bag, she dashed into the American lines. With a bound, she was in the saddle. She had caught up the halter rope to round baby and horses back to the Hudson's Bay camp, when a drunken Yankee trader yelled, "Shoot that d—— squaw!" But the squaw was already hidden in a whirl of dust stampeding back to the British tents. This, then, was the man (and this the wife, who accompanied him) chosen to lead the mountain brigades through the unexplored mountain fastnesses between the prairie and the Pacific. Lewis and Clarke had crossed to the Columbia, and the Spaniards to the

Colorado, but between the Colorado and the Columbia was an absolutely unknown region.

With Ogden as first lieutenant went Tom McKay. McKay was the best shot in the brigade, a fearless fighter, a tireless pathfinder, and one old record says "combined the affable manners of a French seigneur with the wild-eyed alertness of a mountaineer." With hatred of the Indian bred in him from the time of his father's murder, he could no more see a savage hostile without cracking off his rifle than a war horse could smell powder and not prance. Among the trappers were rough, brave fellows—freemen, French Canadians—whose names became famous in Oregon history: La Framboise, Astor's old interpreter, who became a pathfinder in California; Gervais, who alternately served American and British fur traders, helped to find Mt. Shasta, finally sold his trapping outfit and retired to the French colony of the Willamette; Goddin and Payette and Pierre, the Iroquois, and Portneuf, who have left their names to famous places of Idaho. The brigade numbered a score of white men, some fifty or sixty nondescript trappers, as many women, some children and an average of three horses for each rider in the party. These horses came from the Cayuse Indians of the Walla Walla plain. This was the rendezvous after leaving Fort Vancouver. Here

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

was always good pasturage for the horses, and the fur post had store of pemmican traded from the buffalo hunters of the Cayuse and Flathead nations.

Pouring into the south side of the Columbia between Walla Walla and Fort Vancouver, were the Walla Walla, Umatilla, John Day's, the River of the Falls. In the mountains southward, were the beaver swamps. As the entire region was unknown, Ogden determined to lead his brigade West close to the Columbia, then strike up the farthest west river—double back eastward on his own tracks at the headwaters, and so come down to the Columbia again by the Snake. The circle would include all the south of Oregon and Idaho. He writes: "Monday, November 21st, 1825—Having sent off all hands yesterday from Walla Walla, I took my departure and overtook my party awaiting my arrival. We are following the banks of the Columbia southwest. Our road is hilly, and we have great trouble with our horses, for they are all wild. We are followed by a large camp of Indians bent on stealing our horses. Although we rise at day dawn, we are never ready to start before ten o'clock, the horses are so difficult to catch. Wednesday, 30th—We have reached John Day's River. A great many Indians have collected about us. Each night the beaver traps are set out, and in the morning some have been stolen by the

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

Indians. Many horses missing, having been stolen. This does not prevent raising camp, as by remaining we should lose more horses than we could get back. Saturday, December 3rd—We bade farewell to the Columbia River and struck south up the River of the Falls. It is scarcely credible, though we are such a short distance from the Columbia, what a difference there is in the country. This soil is rich. The oaks are large and abundant. The grass is green, though at a distance on both sides all the hills are powdered with snow. Sunday, December 4th—It is now very cold, for we have begun ascending the mountains and camp wherever we can find a brook. The man I sent back for the lost horses, found them on the north side of the Columbia. He was obliged to give the Indians thirty balls of powder to get them back, no doubt a trick, and the thief, himself, restored them, a common practice with all the Indians. We are coming to the end of the Columbia hills. Mt. Hood, a grand and noble sight, bears west; Mt. Helen's north; and to the south are lofty mountains the shape of sugar loaves. On all of these are pines, that add to the grandeur. After descending the divide we reached a plain and struck east, gathering some curious petrifications of fir trees. Our horses are greatly fatigued, for the road is of cut rocks. Deer are abundant. We saw upward of one hun-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

dred to-day, but too swift to be overtaken on this dangerous ground. Many of the bare hills are of blood-red color. In this quarter are three boiling fountains of sulphur. I must find an Indian, who will guide us. If not, we must attempt to cross east without. Our horses are saddle deep in mire."

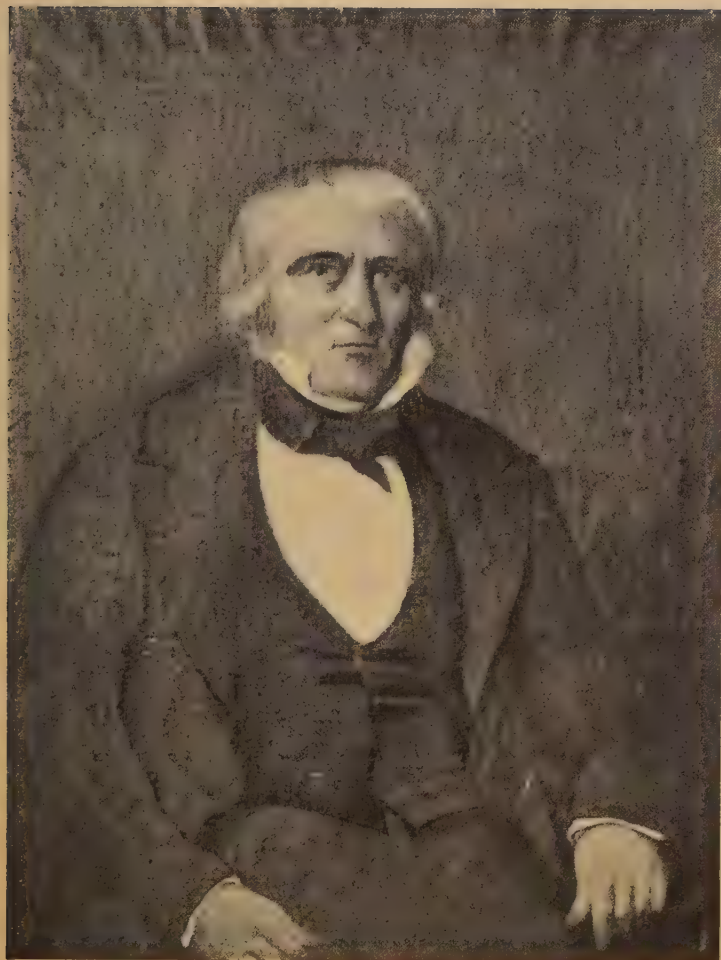
From the time Ogden crossed the sky line of the Blue Mountains for the headwaters of the Snake, his difficulties began. Hunters to the fore for the game that was to feed the camp, the cavalcade began zigzagging up the steep mountain sides. Here, windfall of pines and giant firs, interlocked twice the height of a man, scattered the wild Cayuse ponies in the forest. There, the cut rocks, steep as a wall and sharp as knives, crowded the pack horses to the edge of bottomless precipices where one mis-step meant instant death for rider and horse. And the mountain torrents tearing over the rocks swept horses away at fording places, so that once Ogden was compelled to follow the torrent down its cañon to calmer waters and there build a canoe. In this way his hunters crossed over by threes and fours, but how to get the fractious horses across? It was too swift for men to swim, and the bronchos refused to plunge in. Getting two or three of the wise old bell-mares, that are in every string of packers, at the end of a long rope, the canoemen shot across the whirl of

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

mid-stream and got footing on the opposite shore. Then by dint of pulling and yelling the frantic horses were half frightened, half-tumbled into the river, and came out right side up a hundred yards farther down. At other places, the cut-rocks—a local term that explains itself—were so steep and sharp, Ogden ordered all hands dismounted and half the packs carried up on the men's backs. It was high up the mountain, and the snow that falls almost continuously in winter above tree line made the rocks slippery as ice. For a few days, owing to the altitude and cold, no beaver had been taken, no game seen. The men were toiling on empty stomachs and short tempers. Night fell with all hands still sweating up the slippery rocks. A slave Indian lost his self control and struck Jo. Despard, one of the freemen, on the back. Throwing down his load, Despard beat the rascal soundly, but when the battle was over and all the bad temper expended, the slave Indian was dead. Poor Despard was mad with grief, for no death was ever passed unpunished by the Hudson's Bay. Sewing the murdered man in rolls of buffalo skin, they buried him with service of prayers on the lonely heights of the Blue Mountains. "It is not in my power," writes Ogden, "to send Despard to Vancouver. Until we return to the headwaters, I will let the affair remain quiet. The poor fellow is wretched over the murder."

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

During the march eastward across the valleys, between the Cascade range and the Rockies, one hundred and sixty traps for beaver were set out each night. In the mornings, when camp was broken, from thirty to sixty beaver were considered a good night's work. Snake Indians were met and a guide engaged, but the Snakes were notorious horse thieves, and a guard was kept round the horses each night. Ogden makes a curious discovery about the beaver in this region. "Owing to the mildness of the climate," he writes, "beaver here do not lay up a stock of provisions as in cold countries." As the cold of mid-winter came, the beaver seemed simply to disappear to other haunts. In vain, the men chiselled and trenched the ice of the rivers above and below the beaver dams. The beaver houses were found empty. Tom McKay was scouring the cut-rocks for game with his band of hunters; but it is the season when game leaves the cut-rocks, and night after night the tired hunters came in hungry and empty handed. The few beavers trapped were frequently stolen at night, for there are no ten commandments to hungry men, and in spite of cold and wet the trappers began sleeping in the swamps near their traps to keep guard. "If we do not soon find game," writes Ogden on December 22nd, "we shall surely starve. My Indian guide threatens to leave us. If



Peter Skene Ogden, who led the Hudson's Bay Company Mountain Brigades of three and four hundreds through Idaho, Nevada, Utah, California, Arizona.

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

we could only find the headwaters of the Snake without him, he might go to the devil. We do not see the trace of an animal. I feel very uneasy about food. Sunday, December 25th—This being Christmas, all hands remained in camp and I held prayers. The cold increases. Prospects, gloomy; not twenty pounds of food in camp. If we escape starvation, God preserve us, it will depend on Tom McKay's hunters. On collecting our horses, we found one-third limping. Many of them could not stand and lay helpless on the plain. If this cold does not soon pass, my situation with so many men will be terrible. December 31st—One of the freemen, three days without food, killed one of our horses. This example will soon be followed by others. Only one beaver to-day. Gave the men half rations for to-morrow, which will be devoured to-night, as three-quarters in camp have been two days without food. Sunday, New Year's, 1826—Remained in camp. Gave all hands a dram. We had more fasting than feasting. This is the first New Year's day since I came to the fur country that my men were without food. Only four beaver to-day. Sent my men to the mountains for deer. Our horses can scarcely crawl for want of grass; but march they must, or we starve. In the evening, Tom McKay and men arrived without seeing the track of an animal, so this blasts my hope. What

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

will become of us? So many are starving in camp that they start before daylight to steal beaver out of their neighbors' traps. *Had the laconic pleasure of seeing a raven watching us to-day!* The wolves follow our camp. Two horses killed for the kettle. January 11th—Reached the source of Day's River. Our horses are too lame to move. A horrible road we have had for ten days of rock and stone. We have taken in all two hundred and sixty-five beaver and nine otter here. Our course is due east over barren hills, a lofty range of mountains on both sides covered with Norway pines. Thank God if we can cross these mountains I trust to reach Snake River. There are six feet of snow on the mountain pass here. We must try another. For ten days we have had only one meal every two days. January 29th—A horse this day killed—his hoof was found entirely worn away, only the raw stump left."

February 2nd, they left the streams flowing west and began following down a cañon of burnt windfall along the banks of a river that ran northeast. The divide had been crossed, and the worn bronchos were the first to realize that the trails of the mountains were passed. Suddenly pricking forward, they galloped full pace into the valley of Burnt River, a tributary of the Snake. "A more gloomy looking country," writes Ogden, "I never saw. We have

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

been on short allowance too long and all resemble so many skeletons. We are skin and bone. More beggarly looking fellows the world could not produce. All the gay trappings at the beginning of the march have disappeared. Still I have no complaint of my men. Day after day, they labor in quest of food and beaver without shoe or moccasin to their feet. The frozen ground is hardly comfortable for people so scantily clothed. Ten days east is the buffalo country of the plains, but in our present weak state we could not reach it in a month." Ogden was now in the beaver country of the Snakes and to avoid starvation divided his brigade into small bands under McKay and Gervais and Sylvaile. These, he scattered along the tributaries of the Snake River north and south, in what are now known as Oregon and Idaho, some to the "Rivier Malheur (Unfortunate River) so-called because this is the place where our goods were discovered and stolen by the Americans last year"; others to Sandwich Island River, and Reed's River, and Payette's and the Malade, given this name because beaver here lived on some root which made the flesh poisonous to the trapper.

Few Snakes were met, because this was the season when the Snakes went buffalo hunting, but "in our travels this day (26 February) we saw a Snake In-

dian's hut near the road. Curiosity induced me to enter. I had often heard these wretches subsisted on ants, locusts and small fish not larger than minnies (minnows); and I wanted to find out if it were not an exaggeration, but to my surprise I found it was true. One of the dishes was filled with ants collected in the morning before the thaw commences. The locusts are gathered in summer in store for the winter. The Indians prefer the ants. On this food the poor wretches drag out existence for four months of the year and are happy. During February, we took one hundred and seventy-four beaver. Had the weather been mild, we should have had three thousand. An incredible number of deer here, but only skin and bone, nevertheless most exceptable (?) to us starving." He mentions that it was on Sickly or Malade River that the Blackfeet killed one of his men the preceding year. "If the Americans have not been here since, we shall find beaver." On the 13th of March, McKay came in with a dozen elk, and the half-starved hunters sat up till dawn feasting. But alas, on March 20th, near Raft River, came a camp of Indians with word "that a party of Americans are not three days' march away. If this be true, our hunts are damned. We may prepare to go home empty handed. With my discontented men, I dread meeting the Americans. After the sufferings the

men have endured with me, they will desert." Snake camps now began to pass westward at the rate of four hundred people a day, carrying their supply of buffalo meat and also—what struck sorrow to Ogden's heart—an American flag. A thousand Snake warriors were on the way to the Spanish settlements of the South to trade buffalo meat and steal horses. Near the American Falls, the Brigade fell in with marauding Blackfeet, friendly, no doubt, because of Ogden's wife, who was related to the Northern tribes. "The Blackfeet informed me, they left the Saskatchewan in December and were in quest of the Snakes, but finding them so strong did not attempt it. They consisted of eighty men with the usual reserve of twenty or thirty Piegans hidden in the hills. March 31st—To-day, twenty-seven beaver, which makes our first thousand with two to begin the second thousand. I hope to reach Fort Vancouver with three thousand."

"Sunday, April 9th, Portneuf River, headwaters of the Snake—About 10 A. M., we were surprised by the arrival of a party of Americans, and twenty-eight of our deserters of last year. If we were surprised, they were more so. They expected their threats of last year would prevent us returning to this quarter, but they find themselves mistaken. They encamped a short distance away. With the glass, we could

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

observe the Blackfeet on the hills spying on our movements.

“Monday, April 10th—The strangers have paid me a visit. I had a busy day settling old scores with them and more to my satisfaction and the Company’s than last year’s disaster. We received from them eight thousand one hundred and seventy-two beaver in payment of their debts due the company and two notes of hand from Mr. Monton. *We secured all the beaver they had.* Our deserters are tired of their new masters and will soon return to us. How the Americans make profit when they pay \$3.00 per pound for beaver, I cannot imagine. Within ten months the Indians have stolen one hundred and eighty traps from these Americans.”

In those few words, does Peter Skene Ogden record an episode that has puzzled the West for fifty years. How did these Americans come to sell all the beaver they had to him, at less than they had paid, for the Hudson’s Bay Company never paid \$3.00 a beaver? Were they short of powder as well as traps? And what old score was Ogden paying off? What had happened to him the year before? Was that the year when the Americans stampeded his horses? The record of Ogden’s 1824–25 trip has been either lost or destroyed, and the Americans’ version of the story was very vague. General Ashley’s hunters

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

had gone up from St. Louis and were in the mountains destitute. Suddenly, they met Ogden's brigade on the banks of the Snake north of Salt Lake. When the rival hunters parted, Ogden was destitute and the Americans had Hudson's Bay furs variously valued at from \$75,000 to \$350,000—a variation accounted for by the fact that the St. Louis traders valued beaver five times higher than the Hudson's Bay. The legend is that Ogden's men were demoralized by laudanum and whiskey. He acknowledges that twenty-eight of his men deserted. If the deserters took their furs with them, the transaction is explained. The Hudson's Bay would be out of pocket not only the furs but the hunting outfit to the men. Ashley's record of the matter was that he got "a fortune in furs for a song." Whatever the explanation, Ogden now scored off the grudge. He took the entire hunt from his rivals and exacted two promissory notes for former debts.

With almost 10,000 beaver, Ogden now led his brigade down the Snake northwest for Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. "The Blackfeet," he writes, "have set fire to the plains to destroy us, and collect war parties to surround us. May 6th—It began to snow and continued all night. Our trappers come in almost frozen. Naked as many are and without shoes, it is surprising not a murmur or com-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

plaint do I hear. Such men are worthy to follow a Franklin to the Pole. Two-thirds are without blanket or any shelter and have been so for the last six months. This day, thirty-four beaver from the traps. Sunday, June 18th—All along the plains of Snake River are women digging the bitter root. Their stones are sharp as flint. Our tracks could be followed by the blood from our horses' feet." From the headwaters of Day's River, the brigade wound across westward to the beautiful valley of the Willamette. "A finer stream is not to be found," relates Ogden of the valley that was to become famous. "All things grown in abundance here. One could enjoy every comfort here with little labor. The distance from the ocean is ninety miles. No doubt in years a colony will be formed on the stream and I am of opinion it will flourish with little care. Thus ends my second trip to the Snake Country." The accuracy of Ogden's prophecy is fulfilled in prosperous cities on the banks of the Willamette to-day.

So far, the Oregon brigades had not gone south over the height of land that divides the Columbia from the Sacramento, but as they had followed up to the headwaters of the Willamette and the River of the Falls and John Day's River, they found their sources in those high, beautiful Alpine meadows

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

just fringed by trees, walled in by the snowy peaks and presenting the peculiar phenomenon of swamps above the clouds. Here were beaver runs and houses in a network. Seventy beaver a day—each worth two dollars to the trapper—the hundred traps set out each night—yielded in these uplands. But many of the mountain torrents, that took their rise in these swamps, flowed south and west. Would these streams, too, yield as rich harvest of beaver? “The country must be explored,” writes Ogden, “though we may waste our pains doing it”; and he steered his brigade of 1826-27 to that region, which was to become so famous for its gold and silver mines, California and Nevada.

Striking straight south from the Dalles of the Columbia, Ogden had twenty-five trappers behind in line. Tom McKay, the hunter, marched to the fore with twenty-five more. Gervais and Sylville and Payette each boasted a following of five or six, some seventy men all told, not including the women and Indian hangers-on. From the first night out, horse thieves hung on the heels of the marchers. Half way up the River of the Falls, one night in October, when a high, dry wind was blowing a gale, and the brigade had camped in a meadow of brittle rushes seven feet high, the horse thieves drew off in hiding till the hunters’ ponies had been turned loose.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Then they set fire to the grass and swooped down with a yell to stampede the camp. But Tom McKay was too keen a hunter to be caught napping. Mounted on his favorite cayuse, he was off through the swale like an arrow and rounded the entire brigade into a swamp of willows, where fire could not come. Another time, Payette and that Pierre, whose death a few years later gave his name to the famous trappers' rendezvous of Pierre's Hole, had gone over a hillock to set their traps in a fresh valley, when they came on seven of their own horses being quietly driven off by two Snake Indians. With a shout, the two indignant trappers fell on the Indians with fists and clubs. Indian spies, watching from ambush, dashed to the rescue, with the result that four of the horses were shot, three rushed off to the hills, and the two trappers left weltering in blood more dead than alive. Ogden thus expresses his feelings: "It is disgraceful. The Indians have a contempt for all traders. For the murders committed not one example has been made. They give us no credit for humanity but attribute our not revenging murders to cowardice. If opportunity offers for murder or theft, they never allow it to pass. I am of opinion if on first discovery of a strange tribe, a dozen Indians were shot, it would be the means of saving many lives. Had this plan been adopted with the Snakes,

they would not have been so daring and murdered forty of our men in a few years. Scripture gives us a right to retaliate for murder. If we have means to prevent murder, why not use them? Why allow ourselves to be butchered and our property stolen by such vile wretches not fit to be numbered among the living and the sooner dead, the better? . . . It is incredible the number of Snake Indians here. We cannot go ten yards without finding their huts of grass. No Indian nation in all North America is so numerous as the Upper and Lower Snakes, the latter as wild as deer. They lead a most wretched life. An old woman camped among us the other night. She says from the severe weather last winter, her people were reduced for want of food to subsist on the bodies of their children. She, herself, did not kill any one, but fed on two of her children who died of starvation—an encouraging example for us at present, reduced to one meal a day.”

By November, the brigades were on the height of land between the Sacramento and the Columbia, in the regions of alkali plains and desert mountains in northern California and Nevada. Ogden at once sent back word of his whereabouts to Chief Factor McLoughlin of Fort Vancouver, little dreaming that the trail southward, which he was now finding, would be marked by the bleaching bones of treasure

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

hunters in the rush to the gold mines. Trappers under McKay and Gervais and Sylvaille were spread out on the headwaters of the Willamette, and the Klamath and the Sacramento; but the dusty alkali plains were too dry for beaver. In three months, only five hundred were taken, while man and beast were reduced to extremity of endurance from lack of food and water. By the 16th, they were on the very apex of the divide, a parched, alkali plain, where the men got water by scooping snow from the crevices of the rocks and tried to slake their horses' thirst by dribblets of snow-water in skin-bags. Two thirst-maddened horses dropped dead on the march, the famished trappers devouring the raw flesh like ravenous wolves. Two little lakes, or alkali sinks were found—"a Godsend to us"—writes Ogden, and the horses plunged in to saddle girths drinking of the stagnant, brackish stench. From where they paused to camp—though there was neither wood nor sage bush for fire—they could see the Umpqua in the far north, the Klamath straight northwest, a river which they did not know was the Sacramento, south; and towering in the west above the endless alkali and lava beds of the plains stretching east, the cones of a giant mountain high as Hood or Baker; opalescent and snow-capped. Ogden named both the mountain and the river here Shasta, after the name of the

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

Indian tribes whom he met. He was on the borderlands of California, on the trail which thousands of goldseekers were to follow from Oregon in '49.

Speaking of the Klamath Indians, he says: "They live in tents built on the water of their lakes, approachable only by canoes. The tents are of logs like block houses, the foundation stone or gravel made solid by piles sunk six feet deep. The Indians regretted we had found our way through the mountains. They said, 'the Cayuses tried to attack us, but could not find the trail. Now they will follow yours.'"

McKay had brought in only seven hundred beaver from his various raids on the waters west of Shasta. In these alkali swamps were no beaver. Ogden had explored the height of land. He now determined to cross the alkali desert eastward while there was still a chance of winter snow and rain quenching thirst; and he only awaited the return of his messengers from McLoughlin. "Friday, December 2nd—Late last night, I was overjoyed by the arrival of my expressmen from the fort. One of the trappers hunting lost horses discovered them; otherwise, they would never have reached camp. They could no longer walk and were crawling. For fourteen days they had been without food, for nine days without quenching thirst. Their horses were stolen by the Snakes. On entering my lodge, the poor man fell

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

from weakness and could not rise. I immediately sent back for the other man. About midnight he was brought in, thank God, safe!" Christmas was spent on the edge of the desert: "Did not raise camp. We are reduced to one meal a day. Discontent prevails. We have yet three months of winter travel. God grant them well over and that our horses escape the kettle. I am the most unfortunate man on earth, but God's will be done."

Possibly, Ogden's low spirits may be traced to drinking that alkali water on the divide. For two months the whole camp suffered. The brigade was still among the Shastas and Klamaths in February, and Ogden records a curious incident of one Indian: "Among our visitors is a man with only one arm. I asked him how he lost the other. He informed me the other arm was badly wounded in battle, very painful and would not heal; so he cut it off himself three inches below the socket with his flint knife and axe made of flint. It is three years since. He healed it with roots and is free from pain." Rains now began to fall in such torrents the leather tents fell to pieces from rain rot and for twenty days not a blanket in camp was dry. Ogden set out to cruise across the desert, thankful that sickness quieted the cravings for food. Shasta River was left on the rear on March 13th, "our unruly guide being forcibly tied

on horseback by ropes and all hands obliged to sleep in pouring rains without blankets. Not one complaint in camp. This life makes a young man old. Wading in swamps ice-cold all day, the trappers earn their ten shillings for beaver. A convict at Botany Bay has a gentleman's existence compared to my poor fellows. March 26th—Our guide discovered a grizzly bear. One of the trappers aimed but only wounded it. Our guide asked permission to pursue it. Stripping himself naked, armed only with an axe, he rushed after the bear, but he paid dearly for the rashness, for his eyes were literally torn out, and the bear escaped to the sage-bush."

The guide had to be left with his tribe and the white men to shift for themselves crossing the desert. Knowing vaguely that Snake River was northeast, Ogden struck across the northwest corner of the Nevada desert, Desert of Death it was called among the trappers. Each night a call was made for volunteers, and two men set out by moonlight to go ahead and hunt water for the next camp. The water was often only a lava sink, into which horses and men would dash, coming out, as Ogden describes it, "looking blistered and as if they had been pickled." Sometimes, the trail seekers came back at day-dawn with word there was *no* water ahead. Then Ogden sat still beside his mud lakes, or stagnant pools whose

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

stench sickened man and beast, and sent out fresh men by twos in another direction till water was found. Again and again he repeats the words: "It is critical, but the country must be explored if we can find water to advance. . . . We can't go on without water, but the country must not remain unknown any longer. There are Snake huts ahead. There must be muddy lakes somewhere. June 2nd—I sent two men to proceed southeast and try that direction. They will march all night to escape the heat. If we do not succeed in that direction, our starvation is certain. Sunday, June 3rd—8 A. M., the two men arrived and report nothing but barren plains—no water. No hope in that direction. I at once ordered the men off again northeast. They left at 9 A. M. All in camp very sick owing to stagnant water. If I escape this year, I will not be doomed to come again. June 4th, at dawn of day, men came back. They found water, where we camped last fall (on the Snake). At 9 A. M. we started quick pace, *sauve qui peut* over dreary, desolate, sandy country, horses panting from thirst. At 6 A. M., June 6th, we reached water to the joy of all." They were really on the upper forks of Sandwich and Malheur rivers. The end of July saw the horses of the brigade pasturing in the flowery meadows at Walla Walla and the happy trappers forgetful of all

past miseries, sweeping down the swift current of the Columbia for Fort Vancouver, where Doctor McLoughlin awaited with a blessing for each man.

Ogden had vowed he would not be doomed to cruise in the wilderness another year. He reached Vancouver in July. On August 24th, he was again at the head of the Oregon brigade, leading off from Walla Walla for the Grande Ronde, a famous valley of the Snake where the buffalo runners gathered to trade with the mountaineers and coastal tribes. There was good pasturage summer and winter. A beautiful stream ran through the meadow and mountains sheltered it from all but the warm west winds. Indian women came here to gather the camas root and set out from the Grande Ronde in spring for the buffalo hunts of the plains. Here, trappers could meet half a dozen tribes in friendly trade and buy the cayuse ponies for the long trips across the mountains to the Missouri, or up the Snake to Great Salt Lake, or across the South Pass to the Platte. Ogden divided his brigade as usual into different parties under McKay and Payette and Sylvaile, scattering his trappers on both sides of the Snake south as far as the bounds of the present State of Utah.

Toward the end of September, when in the region of Salmon Falls on the Snake, he was disgusted to encounter a rival party of forty American traders

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

led by a man named Johnson. "My sanguine hopes of beaver are blasted," he despairingly writes. "I am camped with the Americans. Their trappers are everywhere. They will not part with a single beaver. Kept advancing south. The Americans informed me they meant to keep on my trail right down to the Columbia. We are surrounded by Blackfeet and Snakes bound to the buffalo hunt. I am uneasy. The Snake camp has upward of fifteen hundred warriors and three thousand horses. We are in full view of the Pilot Knobs or Three Tetons where rise the waters of the Columbia, the Missouri, and the Spanish River. The waters of Goddin's River disappear in this plain, taking a subterraneous route to Snake River. The chief of the Snakes carries an American flag. The headquarters of the Americans are south of Salt Lake (on Green River). December 14th—Another party of six under a leader named Tullock, a decent fellow, has joined us. He told me his Company wished to enter an agreement with the Hudson's Bay regarding the return and debts of deserters who go from us to them, or from them to us. He says the conduct of Gardner at our meeting four years ago"—when Ogden was robbed—"has not been approved. Our trappers have their goods on moderate terms, but the price we pay them for beaver is low compared to the Americans. The Americans

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

pay \$5.00 for beaver large or small. We pay \$2.00 for large and \$1.00 for small. Here is a wide difference to the free trapper. If he takes his furs to St. Louis, he will get \$5.50. Most of the American trappers have the following plan: Goods are sold to them at 150 per cent. advance, but delivered to them here in the Snake country. Not requiring to transport their provisions, they need few horses. For three years, General Ashley has brought supplies to this country from St. Louis and in that time cleared \$80,000 and retired, selling his goods at an advance of 150 per cent., payable in five years in beaver at \$5.00 a beaver. Three young men, Smith, Jackson, Sublette, bought the goods and in the first year cleared \$20,000. Finding themselves alone, they sold their goods to the Indians one-third dearer than Ashley did. What a contrast to myself. They will be independent in a few years." It may be explained that Ogden's prediction of these American trappers was fulfilled. Those who were not killed in the Indian country retired rich magnates of St. Louis, to become governors and senators and men of honor in their state.

But Ogden could not forget these men were of the same company who had robbed him four years before, and when snow fell six feet deep in the mountain pass to Green River, Ogden laid his plans to pay

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

back the grudge in his own suave way. "Tullock, the American, who failed to get through the snow to Salt Lake, tried to engage an Indian to carry letters to the American camp. This, I cannot prevent. *I cannot bribe all the Indians*, but I have succeeded in keeping them from making snowshoes for the Americans. The Americans are very low spirited. They cannot hire a messenger or purchase snowshoes, nor do they suspect that I prevent it. I have supplied them with meat, as they cannot kill buffalo without snowshoes. I dread if they go down to Salt Lake, they will return with liquor. A small quantity would be most advantageous to them but the reverse to me. If I had the same chance they have (a camp near) long since I would have had a good stock of liquor here; and every beaver in the camp would be mine. As all their traps have been stolen but ten, no good can result from their reaching their camp and returning here. We have this in our favor—they have a mountain to cross and before the snow melts can bring but little from Green River here."

Three times the Americans set out for their rendezvous south of Salt Lake, and three times were driven back by the weather. "It is laughable," chuckles the crafty Briton, who was secretly pulling the strings that prevented his rivals getting either

goods or snowshoes. "It is laughable, so many attempts, and no success. They have only twenty-four horses left. The rest of the fifty they brought are dead from cold. I have small hope that our own horses can escape, but I can cover them with robes each night."

On the 16th of March, the entire encampment of Americans and Hudson's Bay were paralyzed with amazement at a spectacle that was probably never seen before or since so far south in the mountains—messengers coming through the snow-blocked mountain pass from the American camp on Green River by means of dog sleds. "It was a novel sight to see trappers arrive with dogs and sleds in this part of the world; for usually, not two inches of snow are to be found here. They brought the old story, of course, that the Hudson's Bay Company was soon to quit the Columbia. At all events the treaty of joint occupation does not expire till November. By their arrival, a new stock of cards has come to camp, and the trappers are gambling day and night. Some have already lost upwards of eight hundred beaver. Old Goddin, who left me last year, goes to St. Louis, having sold his eight horses and ten traps for \$1,500. His hunt is worth \$600.00 more, which makes him an independent man. In our Hudson's Bay service, with the strictest economy, he could scarcely save

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

that in ten years. Is it any wonder the trappers prefer the American service? The American trader, Mr. Campbell, said their treatment of me four years ago is greatly regretted. The Americans leave for the Kootenay Country of the North. We separate on the best of terms. They told me their traders from St. Louis failed to arrive last fall owing to severe weather and their camp south of Salt Lake had been attacked by Blackfeet, and Pierre, my old Iroquois, was cut to pieces." In other words, Ogden's narrative proves that the St. Louis traders, with a camp on the upper waters of Colorado River, had gone as far north as Kootenay by 1828. I fancy this will be news to the most of investigators, as well as the fact that the Hudson's Bay were as far south as California before 1828. Two months later, in May, on his way down the Snake River to Vancouver, Ogden met a large band of Snake warriors returning from raiding the Blackfeet on the Saskatchewan. In the loot captured from the Blackfeet, were the clothes and entire camp outfit of the forty Americans, who had wintered with Ogden, a convincing enough proof of foul play. The Snakes reported that the furs of the Americans had been left scattered on the plains, and the party, itself, massacred. "The sight of this booty caused gloom in camp. God preserve us from a like fate," writes Ogden. Two weeks later, LaValle, one of

his own trappers, was found dead beside his traps. Near-by lay a canvas wrapper with the initials of the American Fur Company, proof that the marauders had been the same band of Blackfeet who attacked the Americans, first on Green River and then on the Saskatchewan.

Ogden's wanderings had now taken him along all the southeastern tributaries of the Columbia from Mt. Shasta across California, Nevada and Idaho to the headwaters of the Snake, but there was still one beaver region unpenetrated by him—between Salt Lake desert and the Nevada desert. In crossing from Mt. Shasta to the Snake, he had but scampered over the northern edge of this region, and hither he steered his course in 1828. As usual, the brigade went up the valley of the Walla Walla, pausing in the Grande Ronde to prepare tent poles, for the year's wandering was to be over the treeless desert. Powder River, Burnt River, Malheur, where the Americans had robbed him—were passed in succession. Then Sandwich Island and Portneuf were trapped. They were now on the borders of the arid, sage-bush plains. Ashley's man, Jim Bridger, sometime between 1824 and 1828, had found the south side of Salt Lake; and as early as 1776, the Spaniards had legends of its waters. Ogden now swung four

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

days' march southwest and explored the entire surroundings of Salt Lake. Then he struck westward across those wastes that were to be the grave of so many California and Nevada gold-seekers. High winds swept the dry dust in clouds through the air. The horses sank to their saddle girths through the fine sand, and hot winds were succeeded by a blanketing fog, that obliterated all marks of direction, so that the brigade was blindly following the trail of some unknown Indian tribe. "Nov. 1st, 7 A. M.—Our track this day between high mountains on both sides over a plain covered with wormwood. The scouts saw two Indians, whom they captured and brought to camp. More stupid brutes I never saw. We could not make them understand our meaning. Gave one a looking glass and set them at liberty. In less than ten minutes, they were far from us. Had not advanced three miles next morning when we found three large lakes covered with wild fowl. The waters were salt. Next day the men in advance discovered the trail to a large river. Reached a bend in the river and camped. Indians numerous. They fly from us in all directions. We are the first whites they have seen. This is the land of the Utas. I have named the river the River of the Lakes, not a wide stream but certainly a long one."

Ogden had discovered the river that was called

by his own name among trappers, but was later named Humboldt by Freemont. To his great joy, beaver were as abundant as the Indians. The traps set out each night yielded sixty beaver each morning. Ogden at once scattered his brigade in three directions: west toward Salt Lake, where the river seemed to but did not take its rise; north toward the forks of the Snake four days' march away, and southwest where the river seemed to flow. "Nov. 9th—One of the hunters going downstream returned with word this river discharges into a lake, no water or grass beyond, only hills of sand. Advanced to the lake and camped. I was surprised to find the river takes a subterranean passage and appears again, a large stream lined with willows. So glad was I to see it, that at the risk of my life I dashed over swamps, hills, and rocks to it and the first thing I saw was a beaver house well stocked. Long before dawn of day, every trap and trapper was in motion. As dawn came, the camp was deserted. Success to them all! As far as I can see, this river flows due west. Trappers arrived at night with fifty beaver. Indians paid us a visit. On asking them what they did with their furs, they pointed to their shoes. Examination showed them to be made of beaver. It is warm here as in September and the Indians wear no clothing. They are without houses or arrows or any defence."

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

In the midst of all this jubilation over the discovery of a large river and the success in trapping, one of the hunters, Jo Paul, the same Jo Paul who had acted as guide for the Nor'Westers in Athabasca, fell dangerously ill. He was in too great pain to be moved. Yet to remain for the sake of one man meant starvation for the whole camp. Ogden would not hasten the poor fellow's death by marching and the brigade waited till the horses were out of grass. Ogden sent spies forward to reconnoiter good camping ground, sent the tenting kit on, and had the sick man moved on a stretcher. There was no blare of trumpets after the manner of civilized heroism, but on the morning of the 11th of December, two hunters came forward to Ogden and quietly volunteered to remain in the desert with the sick man. The man, himself, had been begging Ogden to throw him in the river or shoot him, as it was quite apparent he could not recover. "I gave my consent for the two men to remain," relates Ogden, not even mentioning the names of the heroes. "There is no other alternative for us. It is impossible for the whole party to remain and feed on horse flesh for four months. One hundred horses would not suffice, and what would become of us afterward?"

Turning back up Unknown River, Ogden wintered on Salt Lake; "a gloomy, barren region, except for

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

wolves, no other animals seen," he relates of the backward march. "Here we are at the end of Great Salt Lake, having this season explored half the north side of it, and we can safely assert, as the Americans have of the south side, that it is a country destitute of everything." On the 1st of January, came the trappers who had nursed their comrade to the time of his death.

"Of all the men who first came to the Snake country," writes Ogden, "there remains now only one alive. All the others have been killed except two, who died a natural death. It is incredible the number who have perished in this country." When spring came, Ogden again set out for Unknown or Humboldt River, following it westward where it disappears into alkali sinks. Two thousand beaver in all were taken from the river. "Country level far as eye can see. I am at a loss to know where this river discharges. We start at dawn to escape the heat. The journey is over beds of sand. The horses sink leg deep. The country is level, though hills can be seen southwest. The Indians are not so numerous as last fall, but from the number of fires seen in the mountains, I know they are watching us and warning their tribes. Nowhere have I found beaver so abundant. The total number of American trappers in this region is eighty. My trappers average

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

one hundred and twenty-five a man for the season and are greatly pleased. The number of pelicans seems to indicate a lake. If it is salt, there is an end to our beaver."

It was not the desert but the Indians that finally drove Ogden back. He had advanced almost to the Shasta in California when a tribe of Indians from Pit River began mauling his trappers, though Ogden had taken the precaution of sending them out only in twos. It was the 28th of May. The brigade had turned northeast to strike for some branch of the Columbia, to pass from what is now known as Nevada to Oregon, when "a man who had gone to explore the lake (where the river disappears) dashed in breathless with word of 'Indians.' He had a narrow escape. Only the fleetness of his horse saved him. When rounding a point within sight of the lake, twenty men on horseback gave the war cry. He fled. An Indian would have overtaken him, but the trapper discharged his gun in the fellow's face. He says the hills are covered with Indians. I gave orders to secure our horses, and for ten men to advance and spy on what the Indians were doing, but not to risk a battle, as we were too weak. They reported more than two hundred warriors marching on us. On they galloped. Having signaled a spot for them to halt five hundred yards

from our camp, I went out, met them, desired them to be seated." One wonders what would have happened at this point if instead of the doughty little man with the squeaky voice and podgy body and spirit of a lion, there had been a coward at the head of the Oregon brigade. What if the leader had lost his head and fled in panic, or fired?

"This order," writes Ogden, "was obeyed. They sat down. From their dress and drums, I knew it was a war party. If they had not been discovered, they had intended to attack us. Weak as we were—only twelve guns in camp—they would have been successful. They gave me the following information through a Snake interpreter: this river discharges in a lake, that has no outlet. In eight days' march is a large river but no beaver" (the Sacramento, or Rogue River named after these Indians). "There is another river (Pit River). We saw rifles, ammunition and arms among them. This must be the plunder of the sixteen Americans under Jedediah Smith, who were murdered here in the fall" (Smith had reached Fort Vancouver naked, and Doctor McLoughlin had sent Tom McKay out to punish these Indians). "They wanted to enter my camp. I refused. A more daring set of rascals I have never seen. The night was dark and stormy. The hostile fires burned all night. As I do not wish to infringe

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

on the territory of Mr. McLeod's Umpqua brigade, I gave orders to raise camp and return. McLeod's territory is on the waters emptying in the Pacific. If Mr. McLeod had reached Bona Venture, he must have passed this stream. I told the Indians in three months, they would see us again, and we steered for Sylvaille's River. Passed Paul's grave where he must sleep till the last great trumpet sounds." In July, the brigade reached Fort Vancouver by way of John Day's River. In four years, the South Brigades had explored Oregon, Idaho, the north of California, Nevada and Utah as well as the corner of Wyoming—a fairly good record for brave men, who made no pretenses and thought no greatness of daily deeds. The next few years, other men led the Oregon brigade South. Ogden was sent North to open up that Russian strip of coast leading to the interior of British Columbia. Henceforth, he led the canoe brigade to the famous Caribou and Cassiar regions, but he came back to pass his last days in Oregon, where he died on the banks of the Willamette about 1854. Looking back over the plain little man's plain life, told in plain words without a thought of heroism, I cannot say I am surprised that his numerous descendants and distinguished relatives of the East are as proud of him as other people are of the Mayflower and William the Conqueror.

Journals of Peter Skene Ogden

Notes to Chapter XXXI.—Ogden's daily journals as sent in to H. B. C. House, London, fill some six or eight note-books—foolscap size—of three hundred pages each. The contents of this chapter are taken entirely from my copies of these daily journals.

The Jo. Paul and his son, Jo. Paul, were two of the most famous guides and bullies in the West during the last century. Of them both the same story is told: of the father in these H. B. C. journals, of the son in the Oblate Missionary annals. In an article on Père Lacombe, I told the story as of the son. What was my surprise to find the same story turn up in the H. B. C. journals, about Jo. Paul, Sr. Whether father or son, here is the legend of their prowess. In the days when the French bullies used to meet and fight the Orkneymen on the Saskatchewan, Jo. Paul chanced to enter an H. B. C. post. Knowing his fame for strength, the clerk thought to put up a trick on him. A sugar barrel was filled with lead. "There, Jo. Paul," said the clerk, "lift that barrel of sugar on the counter for me—will you?" Jo. Paul gave it a tug. It did not budge. He gave it another tug. Not a move! Very heavy sugar. Jo. Paul scented a trick. Mustering all his strength, he seized the barrel and hurled it with a slam right on the counter. It splintered through counter and floor to the bottom of the cellar. "*Voilà, mon enfant,*" says Jo. Paul with a shrug. Whether the incident occurred with the Jo. Paul whose body lies lonely on the desert river, or the Jo. Paul who guided the Oblates up the Saskatchewan, I do not know. It is just a Jo. Paul legend of those early days.

CHAPTER XXXII

1825-1859

McLOUGHLIN'S TRANSMONTANE EMPIRE CONTINUED
—DOUGLAS' ADVENTURES IN NEW CALEDONIA,
HOW HE PUNISHES MURDER AND IS HIMSELF
ALMOST MURDERED—LITTLE YALE OF THE
LOWER FRASER—BLACK'S DEATH AT KAMLOOPS
—HOW TOD OUTWITS CONSPIRACY—THE COM-
PANY'S OPERATIONS IN CALIFORNIA AND SAND-
WICH ISLANDS AND ALASKA—WHY DID RAE KILL
HIMSELF IN SAN FRANCISCO?—THE SECRET DI-
PLOMACY.

McLOUGHLIN'S empire beyond the moun-
tains included not only the states now
known as Washington, Oregon, Califor-
nia, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and
parts of Montana, but it extended north of what
is now the International Boundary through Okano-
gan and Kamloops and Cariboo to the limits of the
Yukon. This Northern Empire was known as New
Caledonia. Soon after coming to Oregon, Mc-
Loughlin realized that it was a fearful waste of
energy and life to transport the furs and provisions
of British Columbia all the way across America to

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

and from York on Hudson Bay, or Lachine on the St. Lawrence. Both could be conveyed cheaper round the world by ship from London; so the ship *Cadboro* begins to ply on yearly voyage from London to the Columbia, with Hawaii as half-way house in the Pacific, where Alex Simpson, a relative of Governor Simpson, acts as Hudson's Bay Company agent to buy supplies from the natives and trade to them in turn hides and provisions from the Hudson's Bay Company farms of Oregon. Later, comes the little steamer *Beaver*, the first steam vessel of the Pacific, to run between Columbia and the Company posts up and down the coast.

Henceforth, though Oregon is under Governor Simpson's direction, it becomes a kingdom by itself, with McLoughlin the sole autocrat. Furs from the mountain brigades of the South—from the Sacramento and the Snake and Salt Lake—from the mountain brigades of the East—from Idaho and Montana and Wyoming—from the mountain brigades of the North—Okanogan and Kamloops and Fraser River and New Caledonia—poured into Fort Vancouver to be exchanged for supplies and transshipped to London.

The Northern brigades were more picturesque even than those of Snake River and Montana. The regions traversed were wilder, the Indians more hostile, the scenery more varied. The Caledonia

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

brigade set out from Fort Vancouver by boat. Sixty or seventy voyageurs manned the large canoes that stemmed the floodtide of the Columbia, the pilot's canoe flying an H. B. C. flag from its prow, the steersman of each boat striking up the tune of a voyageurs' song, the crew joining in full-throated chorus, keeping time with the rap of their paddles, and perhaps some Highlander droning his bagpipes as the canoes wound up the rocky cañons of the great river. Did Indians hang about the Dalles meditating mischief? "Sing!" commands the head steersman, and the weird chant echoing among the lonely hills, rouses the courage of the white men and stems the ardor of the Indians. Where the canoes thwart the boiling torrent of cross currents or nearing rapids—to a man the voyageurs brace themselves, reach forward in their places, and plunge the flying paddles into a sweep of waters that takes all their strength. The singing ceases. Another singing is in their ears—the roar of the waters with the noise of an angry sea till the traverse is thwarted, or the portage reached and the distance measured off by "the pipes" a man smokes as he trots overland pack on back. "Five pipes" are the long portages.

At Okanogan, canoes are exchanged for horses—two or three hundred in the pack train led by the wise old bell-mares, whose tinkling in the peopleless

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

wilderness echoes through the forests like the silver notes of a flute. Pack horses are like pack people—with characters of as many colors as Joseph's coat. There are the rascals, who bolt at every fording place, only to be rounded back with a shoulder nip by the old bell-mares. There are the lazy fellows, who go to sleep in midstream till the splashing waves have soaked every article in the pack. There are the laggards, who slip aside and hide till the tinkling bell has faded in the distance. There are the quarrelers, who are forever shouldering their nearest neighbor off the trail, and the mischief makers, who try to rub packs off against every passing tree, and the clumsy footers, who lose a leg and go down head over heels where the sand slithers or the trail narrows, and the good old steady goers who could find their way unled from Okanogan, eight hundred miles north, to New Caledonia—sleek, well-fed, fat fellows all of them, when they leave Okanogan, however fagged and lamed they may be when they wind up Fraser River.

To the fore, near the pilot, rides the Chief Factor—black beaver hat which must have caused the gentleman a deal of trouble riding under low hanging branches, dark blue or black suit, white shirt, ruffled collar to his ears, frock coat, and when it is cold a great coat with as many capes as a Spanish lady's

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

mantilla, lined throughout with red or tartan silks. When camp is made, first duty is to erect the Chief Factor's tent apart from the common people. Though the old Company no longer swash-bucklered a continent in gold braid with swords and pistols in belt, its rulers still kept up the pomp and pageantry of little kings. Near the Chief Factor often rode an incoming missionary. The traders and clerks strung out in a line behind, with the married men and their families to the rear. Bugle or shout roused all hands at five in the morning, but what with breakfast and loading the pack horses and rounding all in line, it was usually ten o'clock before the long caravan began to move forward. The swish of leather leggings against saddle girths, the grass padded trampling of the horses, the straining of the pack ropes as the long line filed zigzag up a steep mountain side to a sky-line pass—all produced a peculiarly drowsy humming sound like a multitude of bees. No stop was made for nooning. With hunters alert for a chance shot to supply the supper table, with other riders nodding half asleep, the brigade wound north and north, through the mossed forests, now among the rolling hills, with here and there a snowy peak looming opal above the far clouds; now in the valleys where the river flowed with a hush and the sunlight came only in shafts; now on the sky-line of a

pass where forests and hills and valleys rolled a sun-bathed, misty panorama below; now in shadowy cañons where the only sign of life was the eagle circling overhead!

Kamloops was the great half-way house for the north-bound brigades. Here, worn horses were exchanged for fresh mounts. Half the far-traveled traders dropped off to stay in this district. The rest for a week enjoyed the luxury of sleep in a bed, and limbs uncramped from saddle stiffness. The fort was palisaded as usual and was the trading post for the Shushwaps and Lower Fraser River Indians. It had been the headquarters of David Thompson, the mountain explorer long ago, and had been named after him; but on a change of the site was called after the name of the Indian lake. The mountains, which have seemed to crush in on the wayfarers like walls, widen out at Kamloops to upland prairies and rolling meadows flanked by forested hills. To the wearied hunters of the north-bound brigades, it was like a garden in a desert, an oasis of life in a wilderness of mountain wilds. Saddles were hung on the wooden pegs stuck in the clay of the log walls and horses turned out to pasture in grass knee-deep.

Round Kamloops cling a thousand legends of that border region in human progress between savagery

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

and civilization. Indeed, the legends of Kamloops might be pages taken from the border tales of England and Scotland. With Hubert Howe Bancroft of San Francisco rests the credit of rescuing these legends from oblivion. At Kamloops were stationed many of the famous old worthies of the Northwest Company. First was David Thompson. Then came Alexander Ross of Okanogan, later of Red River. Soon after the union of the two great companies, there came to Kamloops as chief factor that Samuel Black, who had been such a redoubtable rival to Colin Robertson in Athabasca. So high did Black stand in the esteem of his old comrades in adventure, that when the union took place he had been presented with a ring on which were engraved the words—"To the most worthy of the worthy North-Westerns." With one of the brigades came David Douglas, the famous botanist, to Kamloops. The two Scotchmen, thrown together alone in the wilderness, became friends at once; but one night over their wine the discussion grew hot. Douglas, the visitor, bluntly blurted out that in his opinion "there was not an officer in the Hudson's Bay Company with a soul above a beaver skin." Like a flash, Chief Factor Black sprang to his feet, as keen to defend the Company as he had formerly been to revile it. He challenged the botanist on the spot to

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

a duel; but it was already dark, and the fight had to be postponed till morning. Scarcely had day-dawn come over the hills when Black tapped on the parchment window of his guest's chamber—"Meester Dooglas! Meester Dooglas! A' ye ready?"

But a night's sleep had cooled the botanist's ardor. He excused himself from the contest, and as daylight cleared the fumes of their wine away, the two Scotchmen, no doubt, laughed heartily over their foolishness.

The Shushwaps were warlike and treacherous and changeable as wind. Living alone among them, it may be guessed that the white trader needed the proverbial wisdom of the serpent. Chief of the Shushwaps in 1841, was that Tranquille, after whom the river is named. Tranquille and Black had had words over a gun, which another Indian had left at the stores; but the chief had gone home with good humor restored. Almost at once he fell ill.

"An enemy hath done this! It is the evil eye!" muttered his wife.

"No," answered the chief, "my only sorrow is that before I die I cannot take by the hand my best friend, Mr. Black, and ask forgiveness for any hasty words."

"Subtle is the evil medicine of the white men," answered his wife.

"Peace, fool!" Then to the Indians in his tent:

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

"Pay no heed to her words. Mr. Black's heart is good. Ask him to have me buried after the white man's fashion."

After his death the chief's wishes were fulfilled, and Mr. Black sent across a board coffin for the body.

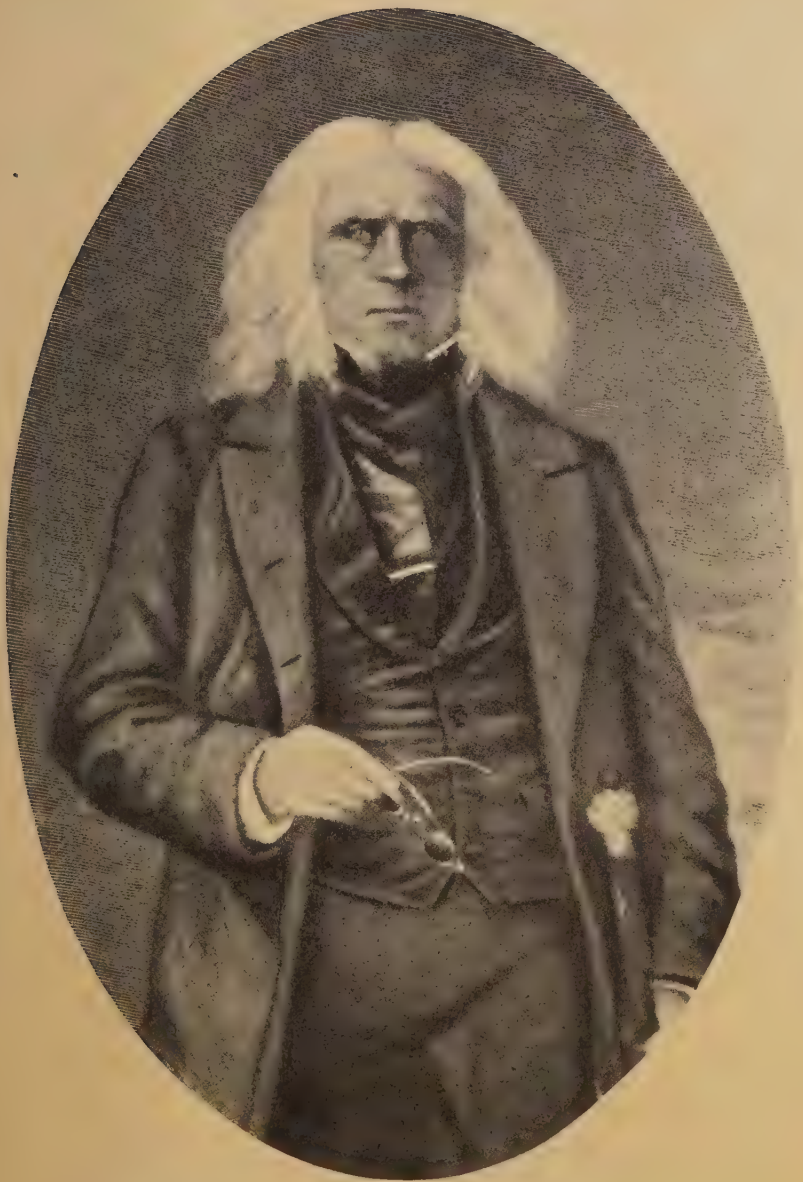
But in the dead chief's lodge lived a nephew to whom the disconsolate widow made moan.

"Ah, great chief, must thy spirit go to the happy hunting grounds alone, while he who sent thee thither bathes in the blessed sunlight? Ah, that there is none to avenge thee! Who shall now be our chief? Our young men are cowards!"

"Enraged beyond endurance," relates Bancroft, "the youth sprang to his feet and gave the old woman a smart slap on the cheek.

"'Very brave to strike an old woman,' she taunted; 'but to avenge an uncle's death is a different matter.'

"Burning with sorrow, the boy arose, threw off his clothing, blackened his face, seized his gun and hurried to Kamloops. There he received every kindness. Though warned by the interpreter, who feared that the blackened face and scanty clothing on a cold February day indicated mischief, Mr. Black directed the boy to the fire in the Indian hall and sent him food and pipe and tobacco. The



John McLoughlin, King of Oregon, who ruled from Alaska to California.

nephew smoked in moody silence. Toward evening, as Black was passing through the room, the young savage raised his gun and fired. The chief trader staggered into the next room and fell dead before his wife and children. The murderer escaped. The news spread. From Fort Vancouver, McLoughlin sent men to hunt to the death the murderer, ordering John Tod to take charge of Kamloops. All traffic at the fort must be stopped until the murderer should be delivered. Calling the Shushwaps, Mr. Tod informed them not a hair of their heads should be hurt; but the guilty person must be found.

"Then arose Nicola, chief of the Okanogans. 'You ask for powder and ball,' he declared, 'and the whites refuse you with a scowl. Why do the white men let your children starve! Look there!'—pointing to Black's grave—'Your friend lies dead! Are the Shushwaps such cowards to shoot their benefactor in the back? Alas, yes; you have killed your father! You must not rest till you have brought to justice his murderer.' Action quickly followed. The murderer lay hidden in the mountains of Cariboo. A few picked men started in pursuit. They found the boy. Placing heavy irons on him, they threw him across a horse and started for Kamloops. They were obliged to cross the river in a canoe. In midstream, with a sudden

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

jerk, the prisoner capsized the boat. But on the opposite bank was old Nicola with a band of warriors. The boy knew his hour had come. As he floated down the stream, he raised his death song, which was hushed by the crack of rifles, and the lifeless body sank beneath the crimson waters."

This legend Bancroft obtained from Tod, who was on the spot at the time, and from McKinlay of Walla Walla, who had received the story first hand.

Tod took up the reins of authority at Kamloops. Tod moves the fort to a better site, has seven buildings erected inside the palisades, and two bastions placed at opposite angles to protect the walls. Then he sends his hunters afield and remains in the fort with no companion save his wife and three children. Four years passed tranquilly and Chief Lolo rose to be the ascendant leader of the Shushwaps. For the story of Tod's rule at Kamloops, the world is again indebted to Bancroft, who obtained the facts from Tod, himself. In the band of three hundred brigade horses roaming outside the palisades was a beautiful cayuse pony, which Lolo, the chief, coveted. "It was the custom," says Bancroft, "to send a party from Kamloops to fish on the Fraser. This year (1846) Lolo was to lead the party. The second night after the departure, just as the chief trader was retiring, a knock was heard at the door. Beside him-

self, his family and a Half-breed boy, there was not a soul about the place. The fort gates were not even fastened.

“‘Come in,’ exclaimed Tod.

“‘Slowly the door opens until the black eyes of Lolo were seen glistening. Though fearful that some misfortune had happened to the party, Tod was Indian enough never to manifest surprise. The Shushwap pushed open the door and slowly entered.

“‘Your family will be glad to see you,’ Tod remarked, wondering what had happened.

“‘The sorrel horse,’ began the chief. ‘I want that horse, Mr. Tod.’

“‘The river has risen,’ observed Tod.

“‘For twenty years I have followed the fortunes of the Hudson’s Bay Company . . . and never before have I been denied a request.’

“‘Fill your pipe,’ said Tod.

“‘Alas! My wives and little ones! Though I am old and not afraid to die, they are young and helpless. . . .’

“‘What the devil is the matter?’ now blurted out Tod. ‘Who talks of dying? Where are the men? Why have you returned? Speak!’

“‘Briefly, Lolo declared that the Shushwaps had formed a conspiracy to attack the Kamloops brigade.

“‘Where are the men and horses?’

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

“‘I hid them as well as I could off the trail, telling them I was going to hunt a better camping ground. I said nothing about the conspiracy, knowing the attack would not be made till we reached the river. Time was when I would not have turned back for such a threat, but my services are no longer valued.’

“‘Well, go to your family, and let me think about it!’

“‘Was it true, or a trick to get the horse? Tod was puzzled. While deep in thought as to what was best to do, Lolo’s head thrust in again.

“‘Will you not let me have that horse, Mr. Tod?’

“‘No—damn you! Go home! If you say horse to me again, I’ll break every bone in your body.’

“‘Trick or no trick, Tod must go to the waiting brigade. Calling the Half-breed boy, he ordered him to saddle two of the fleetest horses. He explained the situation to his wife. Then he wrote a general statement for headquarters, in case he should never return. While Lolo was still asleep, the chief trader and his boy were on the trail for Fraser River, galloping as fast as their horses could carry them. He reached his men by noon. They were surprised to see him; but he merely gave orders to move forward next morning. By sunrise, the party was on the trail. In advance, rode Tod alone. He had told his men to keep three hundred yards behind him, to

march when he marched, stop when he stopped. By 9 o'clock they approached a small open plain enclosed in thick brushwood. Tod motioned his men to halt while he rode forward apparently unconcerned but with a glance to every rock and shrub. His eye caught unmistakable signs . . . a large band of armed and painted savages were moving about excitedly. Lolo was right, but what was Tod to do? He had not ten men, and here were three hundred arrayed against him, powerful Shushwaps, who could handle the rifle as well as any white man. . . . The men to the rear . . . had by this time seen the savages. . . . They knew now why the leader had so unexpectedly appeared. . . . Tod motioned one of his party . . . a George Simpson . . . to come.

“George! Fall back with the horses! If things go wrong, make your way to the fort! Go!”

“The brave fellow hesitated to leave his leader alone.

“‘Damn you! Go!’ shouted Tod. . . .

“The enemy stand watching intently the fur trader's every move. . . . Turning full-front on the glowering savages, Tod puts spurs to his horse. . . . As he rushes, they raise their guns . . . the horseman does not flinch, but quickly drawing sword and pistol, he holds them aloft in one hand

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

. . . then hurls them all aheap on the plain
. . . and he charges into the very midst of the
savages. Why did they not kill him? . . . Cur-
iosity. . . They wished to see what he would
do next. . . There sat the smiling Scotchman
amid the thickest of them.

“‘What is all this?’ demanded the chief trader.

“‘We want to see Lolo. Why came you here?’

“‘Then you have not heard the news. . . .
The smallpox is upon us! . . . ’

“Well they knew what the smallpox was and that
it raged on the Lower Columbia.

“‘That is why I come,’ continued Tod. ‘I come
to save you. You are my friends. You bring me
furs; but you must not come to Kamloops, else you
will die; see, I have brought the medicine to stop it!’”

Ten minutes later, Tod is sitting on the stump of a
fallen tree, vaccinating the Shushwaps, and Kam-
loops’ traditions say, indeed, Tod, himself, ac-
knowledged to Bancroft, that when the Indians,
who were leaders of the conspiracy, held up their
arms to be vaccinated, he took good care to give them
a gash that would disable their arms for some weeks.
A Scotchman abhors a lie; at least, a straightforward
lie that gives no quarter to conscience, but somehow
Tod conveyed to those Shushwap warriors the as-
tounding warning, that if they lowered or used their

vaccinated arms for some time, it would be absolutely and swiftly fatal. So Tod saved Kamloops, and volumes might be written of the legends lingering about the old fur post. Other chief traders succeeded Tod at Kamloops. McLean, son of the colonist murdered at Seven Oaks, Red River, was at Kamloops in the early fifties when all the world was agog with excitement over the discovery of gold in the Rockies. An Indian was drinking on the banks of the Thompson when he saw what he thought was a shining pebble. The pebble was carried to McLean of Kamloops. It was a gold nugget. It was the beginning of the end of the fur traders' reign in the mountains.

From Kamloops, the New Caledonia brigade struck northwesterly on a trail to the Fraser and along the banks of that torrential river up as far as Alexandria, where MacKenzie had headed his canoes back upstream on his trip to the Pacific. Alexandria was now a fur post. Here horses were left to pasture for the year, and the brigade ascended the Fraser in canoes to Fort George and Fort St. James on Stuart Lake, and Fort McLeod on McLeod Lake, and Fraser Fort, and those other northern posts variously known as Babine and Connolly, where the Company had erected permanent quarters.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

If Kamloops resembled some Spanish redoubt perched on some high sierra amid parched, rolling hills, the Stuart Lake region—New Caledonia proper—was like a replica of the Trossachs on some colossal scale. Lakes with the sheen of emerald lay hidden in the primeval forests reflecting as in a mirror woods, cloud-line, treeless peaks and the domed opal of the upper snows, where the white drifts lie forever and the precipices are criss-crossed by the scar of the avalanche as by some fantastic architect. In area, the region is the size of modern Germany. It was here Simon Fraser, the discoverer, had planted the flag of the fur trader and established posts in the land that reminded him of Scottish Highlands.

Fort St. James, being the center of the most populous Indian tribe—the Carriers—has become the capital of this mountain kingdom, and many old worthies of the Northwest days have played the king here. Ordinarily, the fort drowns in security like a droning bee on a summer day, but in times of Indian treaty, or on such occasions of pomp as Sir George Simpson, the governor, coming on a visit of inspection, Fort St. James puts on an air of military pomp, the sentinel going on duty at 9 P. M. and with monotonous tread calling out, "All's Well" every half hour till 5:30 A. M., when a rifle is fired to signal all hands up. Six A. M. work begins. Eight o'clock is breakfast.

Nine, the traders turn to work again. At 12:00, a bell signals nooning; at 1:00, back to work; at 6:00 P. M., duty done for the day.

Harmon, who came West with Henry's brigade of Pembina back in 1811, remains almost to the time of the Company's union, when he retires to Vermont. John Stuart, who voyaged with Fraser, comes after Harmon; but he retires to spend his last days in Scotland. He is succeeded by William Connolly, an Irishman of Babine Lake, a northern post. East at McLeod Lake is Tod, who is to win fame at Kamloops. South is Paul Fraser, son of the explorer, at the Fraser Lake post. Down at Fort George on the Fraser, is little James Murray Yale, who served as a boy under John Clarke in Athabasca, when, on one of the terrific marches of the famine stricken Hudson's Bays, little Yale's short legs could keep the pace no longer and the boy fell exhausted on the snow to die. "Come on! Come on *garçon*," called a big voyageur, whose admiration had been won by Yale's pluck. "Go on," retorted Yale. "I've reached the Great Divide," and the big voyageur turned to see that the brave boy preferred to die rather than impede the others. The rough fellow's heart smote within him. He burst in tears, tore back mumbling out a cannonade of oaths, bent his big back, hoisted Yale on his shoulders like

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

a papoose in a squaw's mossbag, and rejoined the marchers, muttering a patois of pidgin English and jargon French—"Sacré! Too much brave, he little man! Misere! Tonnerre! Come on!" Here, then is Yale, grown man, though still small, now serving the united companies at Fort George and later to be shifted down the Fraser to Fort Langley at tidewater, and Yale Fort, higher up, and Hope at the mountain gorge. To keep track of these little kings ruling in the wilderness, shifted from post to post, would necessitate writing chapters to vie with Hebrew genealogies. The careers of only the most prominent may be followed, and of all the traders serving under Chief Factor Connolly of Stuart Lake, in 1822-23, the most important was James Douglas, a youth of some twenty years.

Born in Demerara, on August 11, 1803, of a beautiful Creole mother and father, who was the scion of the noble Black Douglas of Scottish story—James Douglas had been carefully educated in Scotland and joined the fur companies a soldier of fortune before he was twenty-one. Douglas inherited the beauty of his mother, the iron strength and iron will and never-bending reserve of his father's race. At first, he had been disgusted with the ruffianism of the two great companies, and had intended to retire from the country; but McLoughlin of Fort William had

taken a fancy to the Scotch youth and persuaded Douglas to come West after the union. McLoughlin advised as a friend that Douglas serve in as many posts as possible and climb from the bottom rung of the ladder so that every department of the trade would be mastered first-hand. Hence, Douglas was assigned as clerk under Connolly of Stuart Lake at a salary of £60 a year. He, who was to become titled governor of British Columbia, had now to keep the books, trade with the Indians, fish through ice with bare hands, haul sleighloads of furs through snowdrifts waist deep—in a word, do whatever his hand found to do, and do it with his might.

Chief Factor Connolly had a beautiful daughter of native blood, as Douglas' mother had been of Creole blood. The girl was fifteen. Douglas was twenty-one. The inevitable happened. Nellie Connolly and Douglas fell in love and were married according to the rites of the Company—which simply consisted of open avowal and entry on the books—a pair of children dreaming love's dream in surroundings that would have made fit setting for the honeymoon of monarchs. Later, when there came a Reverend Mr. Beaver to the Columbia in 1837-38, breathing fire and maledictions on unions which had not been celebrated by his own Episcopal Church, Douglas was re-married to Nellie Connolly. In fact,

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Douglas and McLoughlin who had both married their wives according to the law of the Company—and there was no other law—had an uncomfortable time of it as missionaries came to the Columbia. The Reverend Beaver openly preached against McLoughlin living in a state of sin. McLoughlin, being good Catholic, kicked the reverend gentleman soundly for his impudence; but to still the wagging of tongues had himself married by the church to McKay's widow. Even that did not suffice. Catholics did not recognize ceremonies performed by Protestants. Protestants did not recognize unions cemented by Catholics. It is said that the saintly old Father of Oregon actually had himself married two or three times to satisfy his critics; and at this distance of time one may be permitted to wonder which ceremony was written down as holiest in the courts of heaven—the civil contract of the Company by which a chivalrous gentleman took the widow of his friend under his protection, or the later unions lashed like a “diamond” hitch by well meaning enthusiasts.

Meanwhile, up at Stuart Lake, was Douglas learning what was untellable—the daily discipline of strong, absolutely self-reliant living; Douglas developing what McLoughlin meant should be developed when he sent the young man to such

a hard post—iron in muscle, iron in nerve, iron in will.

The story is told that once at a later era in Douglas' life at Victoria, a clerk dashed breathless into his presence gasping out that a whole tribe of unruly Indians had got possession of the fort courtyard. "Will we fire, sir? Will we man the guns?" asked the distracted young gentleman. Douglas looked the young man over very coldly, then answered in measured, deliberate tones: "Give them some bread and treacle! Give them some bread and treacle!" Sure enough! The *régale* pacified the discontent, and the Indians marched off without so much as the firing of a gun. People asked where Douglas had learned the untellable art of governing unruly hordes. It was in New Caledonia, and the school was a hard one. Douglas' first lesson nearly cost him his life. This story has been told often and in many different versions. The first version is that of McLean of Kamloops. All legends are variations of this story, but the facts of the case are best set forth by the missionary to the Carrier Indians—Father Morice, who questioned all the old traders and Indians on the spot. Here is the substance of the story as told to Morice:

Jimmie Yale went home from Stuart Lake to Fort George on the Fraser one night in 1823 to find his

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

two white workmen murdered by two Fraser Lake Indians, mutilated and thrown in outhouses for dogs to eat. The Hudson's Bay Company never let a murder pass unpunished. One of the murderers was secretly done to death by paid agents of the Company, "who buried the remains," relates Morice, "in a way to suggest accident as the cause of death." Five years passed. Surely the Company had forgotten about the crime. The other murderer ventured a visit to Stuart Lake. Chief Factor Connolly was away. James Douglas was the only white man at Fort St. James. As soon as he heard of the murderer's visit, he bade the Indians arm themselves with cudgels and follow him. The criminal had hidden in terror under a pile of skins in a sick woman's lodge. Douglas dragged him forth by the hair, demanding his name. The fellow mumbled out some assumed cognomen.

"You lie," answered Douglas to the stammered answer, firing point-blank in the fellow's face; but in the struggle, the ball went wide. The Indians thereupon fell on the criminal and beat him to death.

"The man he killed was eaten by dogs. By dogs let him be eaten," Douglas pronounced sentence, ordering the body to be cast unburied outside the palisades. This was enforcing the savage law of a tooth for a tooth with a vengeance. The chief of the

Carriers determined to give young Douglas the lesson of his life. Punish murderers? Yes; but not as if Indians were dogs.

A few weeks afterward, followed by a great concourse of warriors from Fraser Lake, old Chief Kwah marched boldly into the Indian Hall of Fort St. James. Douglas sprang to seize a musket hanging on the wall. Fort hands rushed to trundle cannon into the room, but the Indians snatched the big guns, though brave little Nancy Boucher, wife of the interpreter, managed to slam the doors shut against more intruders and Nellie Connolly came from her room half dazed with sleep just in time to grasp a dagger from the hands of the murdered Indian's father. Chief Kwah's nephew had a poniard at Douglas' heart and was asking impatiently:

"Shall I strike? Shall I strike? Say the word and I stab him!"

It was woman's wit saved the captive Douglas. Quick as flash glided Nellie Connolly to the old chief, knowing well the Indian custom of "potlatch," gift-giving, appeasing for bloodshed with costly presents. She offered old Kwah all he might ask to spare the life of her husband. Then dashing upstairs, the two women began throwing down tobacco, handkerchiefs, clothing. The Indians scrambled for the gifts. Douglas wrenched free, and Old Chief

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Kwah bade his followers come away. He had done all he meant—taught Douglas a lesson, though those so-called lessons have a ghastly sudden way with angry Indians of turning to tragedy, as the massacre at Red River testifies.

An event that has gone down to history at Fort St. James, was the visit of Governor Simpson, in 1828. Simpson was young, but what he lacked in years, he made up in hard horse-sense and pomp to impress the Indians. Music boxes, bugles, drums, fifes—all were used in Simpson's pow-wow of state with the Indians. September 17th, his scouts sighted Stuart Lake. The guide to the fore unfurled a British flag. Buglers and bagpipes struck up a lively march that set the echoes flying among the mountains and brought the Carrier Indians out agape. First, clad in all the regalia of beaver hat, ruffled choker, velvet cape lined with red silk, leather leggings and gorgeous trappings to his saddle—rode Governor Simpson. Behind came his doctor and a chief factor riding abreast. Twenty men followed with camp kit, then one of the McGillivrays to the rear. In all, Simpson traveled with a retinue of sixty. A musket shot notified the fort of the ruler's approach. Fort St. James roared back a welcome with cannon and musketry, all hands standing solemnly in line, while Douglas advanced to meet his lord, Connolly being

absent on the Fraser. What with a band playing and the cannon booming, such wild echoes were set dancing in the mountains as almost frightened the Carrier Indians out of their senses. Was the great white lord coming to be avenged on them for the attack on Douglas? But the great white lord, who was nothing more nor less than a clever little gentleman bent on business, kept his band marching up and down the inner gallery of the palisades, chests puffed out, pipers skirling, while he as lord ascendant of the mighty mountains shook hands with the Indians and treated them to tobacco. Simpson passed south to Vancouver.

New Year's Day, 1829, the clerks of St. James determined to punish the Carriers for their raid. Bounteous was the *régalé* of rum dealt out. When the Carriers lay drunk, out sallied the voyageurs and gave the Indians such a pummeling as stirred up bad blood for a year. Douglas' life was no longer safe in Caledonia. In 1830, he left Fraser River to join McLoughlin in Oregon. He had come to New Caledonia, raw, impulsive, violent in his forcefulness to succeed. He went down to Oregon, still young, but a drilled disciplinarian of life's hard knocks—reserved to a fault, deliberate to a degree, cautious and tactful in a way that must have delighted McLoughlin's heart. When Connolly left New Cale-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

donia for Montreal, where he rose to eminence, there came as Chief Factor, Peter Skene Ogden, fresh from leading the southern brigades.

McLoughlin needed Douglas in Oregon. The Company, that had begun two centuries before with one little fort on a frozen sea, had not only stretched its tentacles across the continent but was reaching out to Hawaii, to Mexico, to Alaska. And this galvanizing energy resulted directly from the energy of that little man, George Simpson. "If" is a word that opens the door of lost opportunities. *If* Sir George Simpson had been seconded in his aims by the Governing Board of the Hudson's Bay Company; and *if* those gentlemen who lived fat on their fur dividends had mended their ignorance sufficiently to know what Sir George was driving at; and *if* the Company had bought over the bonded debts of Mexico—as Simpson advised—and traded the debts for the grant of California to the English; and *if* the Company had been less niggardly and paid down promptly the \$30,000 asked for Russia's holdings in California—*if* all these things, then, one wonders whether the southern bounds of British Columbia to-day would be the northern bounds of modern Mexico. But man's blunders are destiny's plays; and the opportunities missed by one nation the prizes seized by another.

Far reaching and statesmanlike in grasp were the schemes McLoughlin had in hand.

Baranoff, the famous old governor of Alaska, had died just a few years before the union of the two English companies, and from the time of his death the grip of the Russian Fur Company slackened on Alaska. Naval officers came out as governors. Naval officers knew nothing of the tricks of the fur trade. Returns to the St. Petersburg company began to decrease. Was Alaska worth holding? That was the question Russians were asking.

As the Hudson's Bay Company pressed toward the Pacific from New Caledonia, their traders and trappers came in violent collision with Russians working inland from the coast. There ensued the usual orgies of rum and secret raid. It became apparent that it would be cheaper for the Hudson's Bay Company to ship some of its New Caledonia furs by sea south to the Columbia than to send the packs inland and south by the horse brigades. The Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825 had granted the Hudson's Bay Company free navigation of streams across Russian territory to the interior of northern British Columbia.

Year by year, English forts had been creeping up the west coast toward Russian Alaska. Fort Langley had been built on the Fraser by McMillan and twenty-five men, in 1827. The party had come from

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

the Columbia overland to Puget Sound. There Captain Simpson on *The Cadboro* met them and carried all some thirty miles up Fraser River to a point on the south bank. The Indians were notoriously hostile, but McMillan kept men on guard day and night, and had his builders sleep in midstream on board *The Cadboro*. By autumn, an oblong fort with the regular palisades, inner gallery for artillery and corner bastions, had been completed; and the men scattered afield to hunt. Expresses were regularly sent overland to Fort Vancouver and one of these led by a MacKenzie with four men, was murdered on an island in the straits in January, 1828. In October, comes Governor George Simpson in pompous estate with band and outriders and retinue of twenty men. McMillan went down to the Columbia with the governor and was succeeded by little James Yale of Caledonia, who promptly sought to render himself secure with the natives by marrying an Indian wife. Gradually, this post became the great fishing station of the Company for the salmon shipped to Hawaii.

Near Nisqually River on Puget Sound sprang up, in 1833, a cluster of cabins known as Nisqually Fort, the half-way house between the Columbia and the Fraser, between Fort Vancouver and Fort Langley.

The same spring Captain Kipling's *Dryad* is sent

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

North with Duncan Finlayson and forty men to build an outpost yet farther north—Fort McLoughlin on Millbank Sound. Work proceeds all summer. Finlayson goes back to the Columbia, Manson taking charge. In spite of every caution against the treachery of the notorious Bella Coola Indians, who long ago proved so hostile to Sir Alexander Mackenzie, a trader by name of Richards disappears—whether a deserter or captive, Manson cannot tell. A chief is seized as hostage till the white man is returned. Sunday, the flag signals no trade. Not a breath of wind stirs the water. Not a canoe is visible, not an Indian to be seen. A drowsy sense of security comes over the fort sweltering in the summer heat. Toward night, the men ask permission to go outside the palisades for pails of fresh water. Anderson does not approve; but Chief Trader Manson takes his pistol and sword, opens the sally port, and leads his men down to a fresh water stream. Instantly, in the twilight, the dense forests come to life. There is the Bella Coola's war-whoop, the crash of ambushed sharpshooters, a spitting of bullets against pebbles and pails, a wild rush of traders and Indians to reach the gates first.

“Bind your hostage! Quick—fire the cannon!” bellowed Anderson sprinting for safety.

The cannon shots drove back the savages and the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

whites got safely inside the palisades with only one water carrier lost. One may guess there was no sleep. Rain clouds rolled up rendering the night pitch dark with never a sound but the lapping of the waters, the tramp, tramp of the sentries, the shuffle of men hurriedly handing down all the muskets from the wall racks, the "All's Well" of the watch every half hour as he passed the entrance to the main house. About midnight out of the dark came a terrified shout.

"Mr. Manson! Mr. Manson! Can you hear me?" It was the captured water carrier.

"Hello! Where are you?"

"Tied in their canoe, and the devils say they are going to kill me unless you let the chief go!"

Manson and Anderson hoist the hostage to the gallery inside the palisades and bid him assure his people he is safe and will be exchanged at daybreak for the water carrier. Daydawn after sleepless night, prisoners are exchanged; and the rescued man reports that the other missing trader had long since been stoned to death by Indian boys. Fort McLoughlin proves too dangerous a fort for the traders to hold. It is torn down, in 1839, and moved across to the north end of Vancouver Island, where it is re-named Fort Rupert and flourishes to modern times.

Nisqually, Langley, McLoughlin, Rupert—nothing

daunted, the Company still pushes northerly and builds Port Simpson. Then, in 1834, it is decided to send Peter Skene Ogden up on *The Dryad* to cross the Russian frontier and build a company post on Stickine River. This is more easily said than done. It is one thing to have free access across foreign territory. It is quite another thing to use that privilege to build a fort on the frontier of a friendly power. Baron Wrangel is governor at Sitka this year. *The Dryad* has barely poked her prow up the turbulent current of the Stickine breasting toward the Russian redoubt of St. Dionysius—a log fort later known as Wrangel—when puff goes a cannon shot! Is it a salute, or command to stop? Out rows a boat with a Russian officer presenting a formal proclamation forbidding the English company from ascending the Stickine.

“This is clear violation of our treaty,” thunders Ogden.

The Russian officer shrugs his shoulders and mutters some politeness through his beard. The Englishmen visit the Russian fort. Very polite are the Russians but very deficient in English speech when Ogden blusters about treaty rights.

“The thing can be arbitrated. We’ll go on up the river anyway,” protests the Britisher with that bulldog persistence of getting his teeth in and hanging on,

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

which characterized his Company. Then the Russians suddenly find their English.

“If you do, we’ll fire.”

Word is sent to Baron Wrangel of Sitka, but Baron Wrangel is opportunely absent. For ten days, they jangle, these rival traders. Then Peter Skene retires from the coast to be appointed Chief Factor of New Caledonia.

But the matter is not permitted to end here. In 1838, McLoughlin visits England. The case is laid before the Board of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Hudson’s Bay Company lays the case before the great British Government, and for those ten days’ delay and those violations of treaty rights and those damages to British dignity, a bill of £20,000 is presented to the Russian Government. It would be interesting to know how the items of that bill were made up. Deep is the craft of these gamesters of the wilderness. They probably never intended that the bill should be paid, but it acts as a lever for what they really do want; and they will generously waive all claims of compensation for damaged dignity if the Russians will lease to them a ten-mile shore strip at the rate of 2,000 land otter skins a year.

“Owning half a continent, what in thunder did they want with a ten-mile shore strip?” a British diplomat asked; but it takes more than a British

diplomat to fathom the motives of a Hudson's Bay Company man. The short strip was a mere bagatelle. The English Company wanted to get into trade relations with the Russians. For this purpose any wedge would do—any wedge but asking trade as a favor. The fine point was to put the other fellow at a disadvantage and make him sue for the privilege of granting the favor, which the Hudson's Bay Company wanted.

Curious—you may search the records of the Hudson's Bay Company from the time of Radisson to Simpson; the method is always the same; motives not only secret but deliberately hidden by every subterfuge and trick that craft could devise; a secret aim worked out by diplomatic cunning, so that the other party to the aim shall sue for the privilege of doing exactly what the Hudson's Bay Company wants. Altogether, it is very funny; and altogether, marvelously clever; and with it all—don't forget—was the *noblesse oblige* of the grand old gentlemen of the grand old school, who play patron to every good cause and would not rob man, woman, child, bird or beast of as much as a crumb. Where does it come from—that curious diplomacy of the Hudson's Bay Company? Is it an inheritance of feudalism, of the mediæval court ways, when a prince made his subjects thankful to God for having their pockets

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

picked by his dainty fingers? To Radisson, the Company owed its existence. Yet they made him glad to beg for a penny. The French won the bay fairly in open war. Yet the Company made France glad to give up all possessions by the simple trick of presenting claims of £200,000. And when negotiations opened with Canada for the surrender of the monopoly in the Northwest, by some legerdemain of diplomacy, Canadian statesmen were glad to pay millions in cash and millions in land for the relinquishment of a charter—which, from the Canadian point of view—the Company ought never to have been allowed to possess. The very year that Russian negotiations are in progress, Pelly, the English governor of the Company, and Simpson, the colonial governor, have both been knighted for their loyal care of British interests abroad.

Let us follow the diplomacy of the ten-mile strip. While diplomats are busy in England, Fort Simpson has been rebuilt on a better site by the same men of *The Dryad* repulsed at Stickine. At the mouth of the Skeena, the H. B. C. flag now flies above Port Essington (1835). Also on the Stickine inland from the Russian strip, Glenora and Mumford have been built.

Back came McLoughlin and the newly knighted

Simpson from the Board Meeting in London. McLoughlin came by way of Canada. A special brigade is organized at Montreal to take possession of the leased ten-mile strip. Spring, 1840, James Douglas in command, assisted by Glen Rae, McLoughlin's son-in-law, by John McLoughlin, Jr., and fifty others, the brigade leaves Fort Vancouver, ascends the Cowlitz River, portages overland to Puget Sound and at Nisqually boards the little steamer *Beaver* for the North. Pause is made at Langley on the Fraser just in time to see the embers of the burnt fort. Jimmie Yale is housed in tents with the savages howling around him ready to attack. Douglas lands his men and rebuilds Langley. Next stop at Fort Simpson, then up to the Russian redoubt on the Stickine, where fifty Russian soldiers are in charge. McLoughlin, Jr., drops off here with eighteen men to take over the fort.

"Eighteen men! Do these British traders know the nature of the savages?" ask the amazed Russians. And the *Beaver* goes on to Sitka with Douglas. Loud roars the welcome from the Russian guns in honor of Douglas. Green were the waters of the mountain girt harbor, gold and opal the shimmering mountains. Etholine is Russian Governor in charge now, a military officer with his bride; and gay is Sitka with bunting and Chinese lanterns and feast

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

and dance while the Hudson's Bay men visit the fort. What did they talk about over their cups, these crafty gamesters of the wilderness, when Etholine's bride and Glen Rae's wife—Eloise McLoughlin—had withdrawn and left the feasters to wassail till midnight?

Who knows! It was the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company from the beginning to tell absolutely nothing. Until they played their cards, these gamesters never showed their hands. All we know is when Douglas left Stickine, the Russian company had agreed to buy all the supplies they could procure from the Hudson's Bay Company farms on Puget Sound and the Willamette and the Columbia. That was cheaper than bringing supplies all the way across Siberia; and the supplies were paid for in Alaskan furs. You see the fine hand of the Company's diplomacy? On the supplies was a profit varying from 1000 to 2000 per cent. On the furs taken in exchange was another profit unspecified but easily guessed when it is known that the Russians got their furs from the Aleutians by club law. What had the deal cost the English? Two thousand land otter a year for a ten-mile strip, the said otter bartered from the Indians at about two shillings each. But one bad blunder was made, which did not come out till long after. Russia had tried in vain to raise her own supplies on a farm at Bodega, California. On

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

the farm were some 1500 sheep and 3000 cattle and horses. Etholine offered to sell the Hudson's Bay Company all Russia's holdings in California for \$30,000. There the old diplomacy of always haggling till you caught the other party to the bargain at a disadvantage—over-reached itself. Douglas haggled and missed the bargain; and the bargain was a chance to give his Company foothold in a country, owned by Mexico, which in turn owed debt of five million pounds to British financiers. It is a sort of subterranean diplomacy, after all, but one can guess to what end these hidden motives were aiming.

While the Company builds yet more forts up the Pacific Coast—Tako, and later Nanaimo—John McLoughlin, Jr., reigns at Stickine. Glen Rae, who came with Douglas to help establish the post, has gone on down to California in connection with that secret Hudson's Bay diplomacy. McLoughlin was an example of reversion to ancestral type. In his veins flowed the blood of his mother's Indian race; and in him were all the passions and few of the virtues of either his mother's or father's race. Morose, severe, vindictive with his men, he had neither the strength of will nor good fellowship to hold the loyalty of his staff. Outside the fort were two thousand of the fiercest Indians on the Pacific Coast. McLoughlin rightly forbade the use of liquor with these sav-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

ages, but while he interdicted his men from all vices, he indulged in wildest orgies himself. In his cups, like many morose men, he became so genial that he actually plied his traders with the forbidden liquor. Excesses followed such outbursts as are better guessed than told. One night toward the end of April, 1842, McLoughlin was on one of his sprees and the fort was a roaring bedlam of drunken, yelling, fighting white men; while outside camped the Indian warriors ready for a raid. A French Canadian was for breaking rules and rushing past the sentry out to the Indian camp. McLoughlin roared out an oath forbidding him. The drunken Frenchman turned and shot his leader dead. Four days later came Sir George Simpson to find flags at half-mast and the murderer in irons. Henceforth, no more rum in Pacific Coast trade! Governor Simpson for the English, and Governor Etholine for the Russians, bound themselves to abolish the use of liquor in trade. The murderer was carried to Sitka for trial but escaped punishment, probably because McLoughlin was so much in the wrong that the dead trader's conduct would not bear the light of investigation. This caused the first friction between Governor Simpson and Chief Factor McLoughlin. The governor blamed the doctor for placing such a worthless son in charge of any fort.

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

What was William Glen Rae, Eloise McLoughlin's husband, doing in California?

He had been McLoughlin's chief lieutenant before Douglas came down from New Caledonia. Swarthy, straight as a lance, somber and passionate in his loves and hates, Rae was a Scotchman of princely presence, like all the men whom McLoughlin chose for promotion. Loyal to his father-in-law to a degree, he was the very man for a delicate mission of possibly far-reaching importance.

Away back in 1828, when Ogden was leading the Southern Brigades to Nevada and Utah and Mt. Shasta, four white men—Jedediah Smith and American trappers—had escaped with their lives from the Umpqua River region and come to Fort Vancouver destitute, wounded, almost naked. They had been trapping in California and following up the valley of the Sacramento had crossed over to the Umpqua intending to proceed East by way of the Columbia when the party of twenty was attacked at the ford of Umpqua River. Fifteen of the trappers were shot down instantly by the Umpqua and Rogue River Indians. All the horses were stampeded. Goods, furs, everything was plundered, the results of two years' toil. Breathless and foredone, the refugees rapped at the gates of Fort Vancouver. They were Americans. They were rivals. "You

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

must positively drive out *all* American trappers," Simpson had ordered McLoughlin. And these men belonged to the same St. Louis outfitters, who had profited by the robbing of Peter Skene Ogden. "Heh! What? American trappers? Bless my soul," exclaimed the Hudson's Bay McLoughlin. "How on earth did you come over the mountains all this way? What—robbed? You don't tell me? Plundered; and by our Indians? Fifteen men murdered! Come in! Come in! McKay, there, I say McKay," he shouted to his step-son scout, "I say McKay, hear this! These gentlemen have been robbed by the Rogue River Indians. Where's La Framboise? (the guide). Saddle the horses quick! Take the South Brigade! Go rescue these gentlemen's property!"

And the hoofs of the South Brigade have not clanked far on the trail at a gallop before McLoughlin has the refugees in the mess-room plied with food, while he questions them of minutest detail. The Americans are completely in his power. He supplies them with clothing and an outfit to proceed East by way of the Columbia; but what does he do with the furs Tom McKay brings back with the South Brigade after a wordy tussle and the giving of many presents to the Rogue River Indians? Ogden had been robbed by Americans. Surely here is a chance to even the score! Can one imagine a grasping Wall

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

Street Cræsus missing such an opportunity to cripple a rival? And I have just related how deep, how crafty, how subtle and devious the Company policy could be at times. What did McLoughlin with these rivals in his power, who had injured him? He wrote Smith a draft for the entire lot of furs at the current London prices—\$20,000 some reports say; others put it \$40,000.

McKay and McLeod are at once sent down with the South Brigade to build a Hudson's Bay fort on the Umpqua. It is known as McKay's fort. La Framboise—Astor's old interpreter—and McKay now regularly range the Sacramento, though Sutter, the Swiss adventurer, who has a fort of his own on the Sacramento, tries to stir up the Spaniards against them and a subsequent arrangement with the Spanish authorities expressly stipulates that only thirty trappers shall be allowed in the brigades. Who is to count those thirty trappers in mountain wilds? La Framboise and McKay led as many as two hundred to the very doors of Monterey. It may have been a necessity of the climate. It may have been a disguise; but the H. B. C. brigades of California dressed so completely disguised as Spaniards that they almost deceived Sir George Simpson.

It was in Simpson's fertile brain that the whole California scheme originated. December, 1841, Mc-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Loughlin, Douglas and Simpson sail into the harbor of San Francisco. By land go McKay and La Framboise and Ermatinger with the brigades. Presto! First news! Sutter, the Swiss, had already bought the Russian fort at Bodega for \$30,000. Douglas grinds his teeth; but Sir George Simpson is not discouraged. Mexico owes England five million, he says; and these Spanish colonies are having fresh revolutions almost every year. They are wine and dined and feasted and fêted by the pleasure-loving Spaniards at General Vallejo's, and later meet General Alvarado at Monterey. What did they talk about? Again I answer—we must judge by the cards which the gamblers played. It is permitted the Hudson's Bay may have a trading post at Yerba Buena, in other words, San Francisco. It is permitted they may buy Spanish hides and Spanish stock to be paid in trade from the stores of Fort Vancouver—goods from England. Also, of course, it is understood these South Brigades have not come to trap at all, but just to drive the purchased stock North by way of the Sacramento to the Columbia. Simpson and Douglas and McLoughlin depart well satisfied.

Next year, in May, came Rae by boat to carry out the plans, and Birnie, the Scotch warder of the Columbia bars at old Astoria, as clerk, and Sinclair as

trader, and McKay and Ermatinger by land as leaders of the inland brigades. Rae lands goods worth \$10,000, and takes possession of a 1000 acre farm on the site of the modern San Francisco, and purchases a building worth \$4,600 to house the goods. Eloise McLoughlin, Rae's wife, does not come at once; and the Spaniards are a pleasure-loving people. Wines are used more than water, and the handsome Scotchman is no unwelcome visitor to the lavish homes of the proud Mexicans. What with wine and beautiful Spanish women as different from the Half-breed wives of the North as wine from water, and plotting and counter-plotting of revolutionists—did Rae lose his head? Who can tell? It would have needed a wise head to remain steady in an atmosphere so charged with political intrigue—intrigue which Rae had been appointed to watch. He certainly drank hard, and he may have cherished errant love, too, for when Eloise McLoughlin, his girl bride, came down from the Columbia River, high words were often heard between the two. American influence was waxing strong in San Francisco; and in his cups, Rae was wont to boast "that it had cost £75,000 to drive Yankee traders from the Columbia, and the Hudson's Bay Company would drive them from California if it cost a million."

Came one of the sporadic revolutions. The revo-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

lutionists were partial to the English, hostile to the Americans. Rae furnished the rebels with arms. They were defeated. They had not paid for their arms. Rae found himself responsible for a loss of \$15,000—some accounts say \$30,000—to his Company. That he was in love with a Spanish woman may have been a baseless rumor; but if there were a shadow of truth in it, it must have furnished additional reason for discrediting him with his father-in-law—McLoughlin. January, the 19th, at eight A. M., Sinclair, the clerk, heard loud cries above the store. He dashed upstairs into Rae's apartments to find him standing in the presence of Eloise McLoughlin with a pistol in his hand ready to kill himself. Sinclair knocked the weapon from his hand. A shot rang out. Rae had had another pistol and fell to the floor with his brains blown out. On a table near were the bottle of an opiate, which he had taken to deaden pain, and his will, written that very morning. His wife fainted. Absolutely nothing more is known of the tragedy than the facts I have set down here. It is a theme rather for the novelist than the historian. Simpson ordered the San Francisco post closed. Dugald McTavish came down in March of '46 to close up affairs. The one-thousand-acre farm, which would have netted the Company more than all the furs of Oregon if they

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

had held on to it till San Francisco grew to be a city, was relinquished without any compensation of which I could find a record. The store was sold for \$5,000. So ended the Hudson's Bay Company's ambitions for empire in California. The truth is—in spite of Sir George Simpson's efforts, and owing to blunders on the part of the British Government, which will be given in the next chapter, the Company was playing such a losing game in Oregon, it was useless to hold on to California longer.

Notes to Chapter XXXII.—This entire chapter deals with such a vast field and with so many disputed points, it would literally require a large volume to give all the authorities or deal in detail with the disputes. I have not attempted to give a chronological account of McLoughlin's empire. So vast was it and so varied the episodes, a chronological account would have required a jumping from spot to spot from Alaska to California, resembling the celerity of a flea. Instead, I have grouped the leading episodes and leading characters and leading legends according to area, and told each district's story in a separate group. This gives at least enough coherence to keep the facts in memory.

As to authorities, I have drawn my data primarily from the Archives of H. B. C. House; secondarily from such marvelous collections of data as Hubert Howe Bancroft's, and Father Morice and the hundreds of old navigators and traders whose journals of this era have been given to the world. In addition, I have consulted every authority who has ever written on the era. Naturally, among so many authorities, there are wide discrepancies. Where I have taken my information from Hubert Howe Bancroft, I have quoted him word for word, with full credit, but in two or three cases, it will be seen my story differs from his; for instance, the story of Douglas at Stuart Lake, in which his version makes Douglas out a hero, mine makes Douglas out a very human hero, learning the lessons that afterward made him great. In each case where my version differs from Mr. Bancroft's, my authority has been the H. B. C. Archives—

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

which were not accessible when Mr. Bancroft wrote, or such well-known sources as Morice, who got his facts on the spot, while Bancroft had to depend on the memory and contradictory testimony of old retired factors.

Again in the case of names, take one example. Different authorities refer to the ubiquitous McKay as Robt., Alex, Dan, Joseph. Now there may have been all these McKays in the Oregon service, for the McKays of the fur trade were legion. But the McKay, who led the South Brigade, was one and the same and only Tom McKay, son of Mrs. McLoughlin's first husband. Another error—it is said this McKay took cruel part in the Seven Oaks massacre. To say that Tom McKay, who from the time of his father's death hated Indians from the marrow of his bones, took part in a massacre of white men—is simply absurd. As a matter of fact, this Tom McKay must have been about ten years old at that time. He certainly was present; but I should be reluctant to believe that a boy of that age fought and killed a full grown H. B. C. soldier. A hundred such discrepancies occur in the California story, which space forbids my pointing out, but where I have departed from old authorities, I have been guided by H. B. C. manuscripts. For instance, all authorities say H. B. C. trappers were not in California before 1835; yet I read fifteen hundred pages of their wanderings there, before 1828.

Okanogan is spelled as many ways as it has letters. I have spelled it the way it is pronounced—O-kan-og-an. I need not explain such place names as Okanogan, Kamloops, Nicola are from Indian tribes.

In H. B. C. House are simply tons of MSS. bearing on McLoughlin, which I did not go over because they deal with the story where I leave off—namely where the history of the H. B. C. becomes the history of the pioneer and the colonist. He, who takes up the story where I leave off, will need to spend both time and money on transcripts of these folios. There are literally tons.

The descriptions of the fur brigades are taken from the journals of the leaders and of the missionaries who accompanied them.

Bancroft has been accused of telling his legends too dramatically. How could the legends be anything but dramatic? It was a dramatic life day and night all the year round.

Two or three places, I have not given the names of the factors who succeeded each other directly, skipping nonentities, or men,

McLoughlin's Transmontane Empire

who ruled for only a few months, for instance, McDonald and Manson at Langley before Yale. In H. B. C. Archives is a very full account of these Fraser River forts. Also it has been impossible to give the founding of the coast forts chronologically. Rupert and Nanaimo both came after the abandonment of McLoughlin Fort, and there were two Fort Simpsons.

A tragic story attaches to Paul Fraser, son of Simon, which space forbids giving. It will be found in Morice's "New Caledonia."

Jno. Stuart of New Caledonia was a cousin of Lord Strathcona and the influence that induced young Donald Smith to join the fur traders.

Mayne is responsible for the story of Douglas and the treacle.

A great many Kiplings served in the H. B. C. from 1750; all as seamen.

CHAPTER XXXIII

1840-1859

THE PASSING OF THE COMPANY—THE COMING OF THE COLONISTS TO OREGON—THE FOUNDING OF VICTORIA NORTH OF THE BOUNDARY—WHY THE H. B. C. GAVE UP OREGON—MISRULE OF VANCOUVER ISLAND—MCLOUGHLIN'S RETIREMENT.

ANOTHER subject had McLoughlin and Simpson laid before the Governing Board of London in that winter of 1838-39. The treaty of joint occupation continued between the United States and Great Britain; but Americans were yearly drifting into the valley of the Columbia. First came such occasional trappers as Jedediah Smith and Wyeth, retreating with loss of life at the hands of the Indians and loss of profits from the opposition of the Hudson's Bay Company. Of the two hundred men who followed Wyeth through the mountains in the early thirties, one hundred and sixty were killed; but men like Wyeth and Kelley, of Boston, sent back word to the Eastern States of the marvelous wealth in forest and land of this Oregon empire. Then came the missionaries in 1834,

The Passing of the Company

the Lees, and Whitmans, and Spauldings—a story that is, in itself, a book; but it does not concern this record of the Hudson's Bay Company. Missionaries were not in the service of the English corporation. They, too, sent word to the East of openings in the Oregon country for the American settler. To be sure, two thousand miles of waste land and mountain lay between the Eastern home seeker and this Promised Land, but was that a thing to deter frontiersmen whose ancestors had hewn their way from Virginia across the Blue Mountains to the Bloody Ground of Tennessee and Kentucky? The adventure of it but acted as a spur. Old pathfinders who had settled down as farmers on the frontier of the Missouri and Mississippi, felt again the call of the wilderness, shouldered their rifles, and with families in tented wagons set out for Oregon. Another cause stimulated the movement. In the East were hard times. The railroad had not yet reached the pioneer of the prairie. He had no way of sending his produce to market. Far off hills looked green. If he could but reach the Columbia—he thought—there was the ocean at his door as a highway for commerce.

American farmers began to drift to the Columbia Valley. At first there was no general movement. The thing was almost imperceptible. Wandering

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

trappers turned farmers and squatted down with their families in the valleys of the Willamette and the Walla Walla and the Cowlitz. Then, as early as 1838, four families from the East came riding over the mountains seeking homesteads. McLoughlin shook his head. The thing seemed almost impossible. He remembered what the coming of the colonists had meant in Red River—the beginning of the end with the fur trade; and in Oregon, the coming of the colonist would be fraught with more importance. If American settlers outnumbered English traders, diplomacy might fold its hands. Joint occupancy would end in American possession. From the first, McLoughlin had encouraged his old traders and trappers to settle on farms in the Willamette Valley—at the famous Champoeg Colony. Fort Vancouver, itself, now comprised thirty miles of cultivated land, but between the Columbia and the Russian posts to the north was *no* settlement, only fur posts, and this was the very region where hinged the dispute between England and the United States for possession.

“Fifty-four forty or fight,” became the slogan of the jingoists, which meant the United States claimed territory as far as 54°; in a word to the Russian possessions. In a nutshell, the reasons for the claim were these:

The Passing of the Company

When the United States took over Louisiana, Louisiana extended to the Columbia. Gray, the Boston trader, had discovered the Columbia River. Lewis and Clarke, the American explorers, had erected their wintering fort on its banks. Astor, the American trader, had built his fur post on the Columbia before the Canadians had come; and though the fort was sold to the Canadians, after the war of 1812, the American flag had been restored to Astoria, though it remained in possession of the Canadians.

Answered the British to these claims: Louisiana may extend to the Columbia, but it does not extend beyond it. Gray, the Boston man, may have discovered the mouth of the Columbia, but Vancouver, the Englishman, in the same year as Gray's voyage, ascended the Columbia, and explored every inch of the coast from the Columbia to the Russian settlements, taking possession for Great Britain. Especially, did he discover all parts of Puget Sound. Astor, the American, may have built the first fur post on the Columbia, but Astor's managers sold that post to the Canadian Company; and though the American flag was restored to Astoria, it was distinctly on the specified understanding that the treaty of joint occupancy should not prejudice the final decision of possession in Oregon.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Jingoists in England wanted all of Oregon. Jingoists in America wanted all of British Columbia's coast up to Sitka. Wise heads in England were willing that the boundary should be compromised at the north bank of the Columbia. Wise heads in America were willing to relinquish United States claims beyond the forty-ninth parallel; but the foolish catch cry of "Fifty-four forty or fight" was being used as an election dodge and stirred up ill feeling enough to prevent compromise on either side.

While pompous statesmen, who knew absolutely nothing about Oregon, were deluging Congress and Parliament with orations on the subject of the boundary, ragged men and women, colonists in homespun, colonists many of them too poor for even homespun, with barefooted children, and men and women clad in buckskin, were settling the question in a practical way. They were not *talking* about possessions. They were *taking* possession.

This was the situation as McLoughlin and Simpson laid it before the Governing Board in the winter of 1838-39. Now fur traders never yet welcomed colonists. The coming of the colonists means the going of the game; but something must be done to counteract these American settlers and if possible hold the Columbia River as a highway for the Hudson's Bay brigades. The Puget Sound Agricultural

The Passing of the Company

Company was formed with Hudson's Bay men as stockholders and McLoughlin as manager, to hold the country between Columbia River and Puget Sound—modern Washington—for the English. The capital was £200,000 in 2000 shares; but there never was any intention that the venture should pay. Very little of the capital was ever paid in. The aim was to hold a region as large as England and Scotland for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Coming back to Oregon, in 1839, with his son David, now a graduated doctor, McLoughlin sent his old trappers into the Cowlitz Valley as settlers, and had a farm of five thousand acres measured off for the Puget Sound Company. Here the stock was raised that supplied the inland posts with food. Hudson's Bay men from Red River were sent overland to colonize the Puget Sound region.

The precaution was useless. There are times when the ragged colonist in homespun is wiser than the wariest diplomat that kingcraft ever produced. Congressional disputes, missionary lectures, the report of the American secret agent Slocum sent from Washington to observe the trend of events on the Pacific, the efforts of the Oregonian Society formed in Massachusetts—all fanned the flame of emigration to the West to a furore. More settlers in tented

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

wagons rolled slowly westward from the Missouri. Jason Lee comes back with more missionaries in 1840. Lieutenant Wilkes of the American Exploring Squadron slips up the Columbia, in 1841, to observe things for himself. In 1842, Doctor White leads more than one hundred and twenty people to the Columbia, and all the while the settlers are clamoring to Washington for two things: (1) land grants for the farms on which they have "squatted"—some of them have "squatted" on as much as 1000 acres; (2) extension of American Government over them. And all the while, Washington politicians delay to close the boundary dispute. Why? Every day's delay brought more settlers into the country and strengthened the American claim.

Lieutenant Wilkes of the American Squadron visits McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver. McLoughlin returns the courtesy by going across to the American ships off Puget Sound and dining with Wilkes. Unfortunately, while McLoughlin was absent, down came Sir George Simpson with the Columbia brigade from New Caledonia. It was the 5th of July. Simpson's suspicions took fire. Was McLoughlin—the Company's Chief Factor—celebrating the 4th of July on the American ship? As a matter of fact, McLoughlin had been invited to do so, but out of respect for his Company had gone across a day

late. McLoughlin returned to find Simpson in a towering rage, raking Douglas and Ogden and Erma-tinger over the coals for not "driving out the Americans." Wilkes came back with McLoughlin. The encounter must have been comical. Sir George, icy and frigid and pompous at the head of the banquet table; Wilkes, the American, suave and amused; Douglas, grave, plainly perceiving the time had come when he must choose between loyalty to McLoughlin or loyalty to Simpson; Ogden, down from New Caledonia, pudgy and good natured as usual, but missing not a turn of the by-play; Erma-tinger doing his best to fill in the heavy silence with tales of his mountain brigade; the Governor's Highland pipers puffing and skirling and filling the great dining hall with tunes of Scottish Highlands. What were McLoughlin's thoughts? Who knows? Simpson's orders were to give *no* aid of any sort to American colonists and missionaries; but McLoughlin—as one of the Company's directors afterward reported—was not a man to be bulldozed. He, too, perceived the time had come when he must choose between his Company and his conscience; for no man ever appealed in vain to McLoughlin for aid. To colonists and missionaries alike, he extended goods on credit. If he had not, the chances are they would have passed their first year on the Columbia

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

in semi-starvation; and to their shame, be it said, some forgot to pay the debts they owed McLoughlin. To them, he was the hated aristocrat, representative of the hated English monopoly, that was trying to wrest Oregon from American control. Not the reproofs of his Company, not the rage of his governor, but the ingratitude of the people whose lives he had saved at sacrifice to himself—cut McLoughlin to the quick. The very winter after Governor Simpson's visit, a petition was drawn up by the settlers and forwarded to Congress, bristling with bitter charges against the Hudson's Bay Company.

One more influence tended to quicken the pulse of public interest in Oregon. This was the famous and disputed Whitman Ride. Did Doctor Whitman, the missionary, save Oregon? For years popular sentiment cherished the belief that he did. Of late, historical critics have gone to the other extreme. The facts are these. It is not easy to make converts of Indians. Results are of slow growth. In the fall of 1842, the Missionary Board of the East decided to withdraw its mission on the Walla Walla. To Whitman such a move at this critical time when a straw's weight might turn the balance either way to England or to the United States—seemed nothing short of a national calamity. "I must go East," he told his wife. "I must see Webster at Washington, but the



Adam Thom

In the early days of Red River Settlement there were neither judges nor juries. The Company was autocrat supreme. When the people began to clamor for self-government, Adam Thom, a writer of Montreal, was brought up as First Recorder, and his régime became noted for his autocratic rule. Enemies, of course, said that Thom was the tool of the Company.

The Passing of the Company

Mission can send me to Boston. I don't want the Hudson's Bay to know what I am about." It was already October. Snow was falling on the mountains. The passes were closed for the year. "Can I get through to the East?" Whitman asked trappers and Indians. In answer, they laughed. The thing was not only impossible—it was mad. But Whitman had already accomplished things both mad and impossible. He had brought wagons across mountains, where fur traders said wagons could never come; and he had led missionaries over mountain barriers difficult as any Alps scaled by European warriors. Accompanied by Lovejoy, a lawyer, Whitman set out on October 3rd. Mrs. Whitman remained alone at the mission till the danger of a brutal Indian, trying to force his way into her room at night, induced the dauntless woman to accept Chief Trader McKinlay's invitation to go down to the Hudson's Bay fort at Walla Walla, where Mrs. McKinlay, Peter Ogden's daughter, afforded companionship. On pressed Whitman over the mountains. This was the ride famous in the Western States. Its story belongs more to the pioneer than the Company. Therefore, it may not be related here. Suffice to say, Whitman increased "the Oregon fever" already raging in the East. He stirred up Webster, and he stirred up Congress, and he stirred up missionary

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

boards of every denomination. Frémont was appointed by Congress to convoy the emigrants westward. The Oregon movement of 1843 would have been important without Whitman's crusade. With his crusade, it became epoch-marking. If this was "saving Oregon," then spite of historic critics, Whitman played an important rôle.

The movement westward had become a tide. From Massachusetts, from the Mississippi States, from the South, the emigrants gathered to Fort Independence on the Missouri for the long trip overland. This was the starting point of the Oregon Trail. Tented wagons—the prairie schooner—pack horses, ox carts, straggling herds of horses and cattle and sheep came rolling to the Missouri in '43. May 22nd, with a pilot to the fore and a whoop as signal, the long line files out for Oregon—one thousand persons, one hundred and twenty wagons, some five thousand head of stock. On the Kansas, in June, pause is made to elect officers and maintain some kind of system. Peter Burnett, a lawyer, is chosen Captain; J. W. Nesmith, second in command, with nine others as assistant officers. Later, the travelers going light—on horseback or in light wagons—march to the fore. The heavy wagons and ox carts and stock come behind. The former division is known as "the light," the latter as "the cow column."

The Passing of the Company

Chief leader of the slow-goers is Jesse Applegate, a man to become famous in Oregon.

It is like the migration of ancient people in pre-historic times—the rise at dawn, the rifle shot to signal watch for the night is over, the tents and wagons pouring out the people to begin another day's march, the women cooking breakfast over camp-fire, the men rounding up the stock! Forward scour the scouts to see that no danger besets the trail. Oxen are slowly hitched to the wagons forming a circular fort for the night camp; and these drag out in divisions of fifteen or twenty each. Young men on horseback flank the trail as out-guards and hunters. These have arduous work. They must ride twenty miles from the humming caravan before they will find scampering game for the night supper. Sharp at seven A. M. a trumpet blows. The long whips lash out. The wagons rumble into motion. The out-riders are off at a gallop. The long caravan moves drowsily forward, and the camping place sinks on the horizon like a sail at sea. Pilots choose watering place for the noon hour, but teams are not unhitched. Promptly at one, writes Mr. Applegate, "the bugle sounded and the caravan resumed its western journey. Drowsiness falls on man and beast. Teamsters drop asleep on their perches . . . till the sun is low in the west." Again the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

pilot has chosen good watering place for camping ground, and the wagons circle into a corral for the night.

By the end of August, the pioneers are in the mountains at Fort Hall, on the very borders of their Promised Land. Two-thirds of the journey lies behind them, but the worst third is to the fore, though they are now on the outskirts of what was then called Oregon. Doctor Whitman goes ahead with the trail breakers to cut a road for the wagons through the dense mountain forests. Space does not permit the details of this part of the journey. This, too, belongs to the story of the pioneer. It was November before the colonists reached the Columbia. How splendid was the reward of the long toil, they now know; but ominous clouds gathered over the colony. The Columbia was a swollen sea with the autumn rains. The Indians were rampant, stampeding the stock.

"Shall we kill—is it good we kill—these Bostonais who come to take our lands?" the excited natives asked McLoughlin, the Hudson's Bay man, at Fort Vancouver. To Pacific Coast Indians, all Americans were Boston men, so named from the first ship seen on the coast. "Shall we kill these Boston men who make bad talk against the King George men?"

"Kill? Who said the word?" thundered Mc-

The Passing of the Company

Loughlin, thinking, no doubt, to what lengths such a game on the part of the fur trader led in Red River; and it is said he knocked the Indian miscreant down.

"The people have no boats. They are without food or clothing," messengers reported at the Company fort.

The weather had turned damp and cold. Autumn rains were slashing down slantwise. Again McLoughlin had to choose between his Company and his conscience. Had he but restrained his hand—done nothing—disease and exposure would have done more than enough to the incoming colonists; but he did not hesitate one moment, not though the colonists were cursing him for a Hudson's Bay oppressor and the Company threatening to dismiss him for his friendship with the Americans. Instantly, he sent his traders upstream with rafts and boats and clothing and provisions for the belated people.

"Pay me back when you can," was the only bond he laid on the needy people; and a good many paid him back by cursing him for "an aristocrat." Rain was drenching down as the boats came swirling opposite Vancouver Fort. On the wharf stood the Chief Factor, long hair, white as snow, blowing wet in the wind, with hand of welcome and cheer extended for every comer. One woman had actually

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

given birth to a child as the rafts came down the Columbia. For days, the Company's fort was like a fair—five hundred people at a time housed under Vancouver's roofs or camped in the courtyard till every colonist had erected, and taken his family to, his own cabins.

Among so many heterogeneous elements as the colonists were some outlaws, and these within a few months were threatening to "burn Fort Vancouver about the old aristocrat's ears." The colonists had organized a provisional government of their own—which is a story by itself; and they begged McLoughlin to subscribe to it that they might protect Fort Vancouver from the lawless spirits.

"You must positively protect your rights here and at once or you will loose the country," McLoughlin had written to the Governing Board of London. No answer had come. The threats against Fort Vancouver became bolder. The Indian conspiracy, that shortly deluged the land in blood, was throwing off all concealment. McLoughlin built more bastions and strengthened his pickets. Still no answer came to his appeal for protection by the English Government. Colonists, who loved McLoughlin as "the father of Oregon," begged him to subscribe to the provisional government. Ogden advised it. Ermatinger was ready to become an American cit-

The Passing of the Company

izen. Douglas was absent in the North. Fearful of Indian war now threatening and dreading still more an international war over the possession of Oregon, McLoughlin, after long struggles between Company and conscience, after prayers for hours on his knees for God's guidance in his choice—subscribed to the provisional government in August, 1844.

Six months too late came the protection for which he had been asking all these years—the British Pacific Squadron. Perhaps it was as well that the war vessels did come too late, for Captain Gordon, commander of the fleet and brother to Aberdeen, then Cabinet Minister of England, was a pompous, fire-eating, blustering fellow, utterly incapable of steering a peaceful course through such troublous times. With Gordon boasting how his marines could “drive the Yankees over the mountains,” and outlaws among the colonists keen for the loot of a raid on Fort Vancouver—friction might have fanned to war before England or the United States could intervene.

The main fleet lay off Puget Sound. The ship *Modiste*, with five hundred marines, anchored in the Columbia off Vancouver and patrolled the river for eighteen months, men drilling and camping on the esplanade in front of the fur post.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

Came also in October, 1845, two special commissioners from the Hudson's Bay Company to report on Oregon. The report was sent back without McLoughlin's inspection. They had reported against him for favoring the American settlers. Knowing well this was the beginning of the end, McLoughlin sent for Douglas to come down and take charge. The mail of the following spring dismissed McLoughlin from the service. That is not the way it was put. It was suggested he should retire. McLoughlin gave up the reins in 1846 and withdrew from Vancouver Fort to live among the settlers he had befriended at Oregon City on the Willamette. He died there in 1857. It is unnecessary to express an opinion on his character. The record of his rule in Oregon is the truest verdict on his character. His was one of the rare spirits in this world that not only followed right, but followed right when there was no reward; that not only did right, but did right when it meant positive loss to himself and the stabs of malignity from ungrateful people whom he had benefited. The most of people can act saintly when a Heaven of prizes is dangling just in front of the Trail, but fewer people can follow the narrow way when it leads to loss and pain and ignominy. McLoughlin could, and that Christ-like quality in his character places him second to none among the

The Passing of the Company

heroes of American history. As Selkirk's name is indissolubly connected with the hero-days of Red River, so McLoughlin's is enshrined in the heroic past of Oregon. In Hudson's Bay House, London, I looked in vain for portraits or marble busts of these men. Portraits there are of bewigged and beruffled princes and dukes who ruled over estates that would barely make a back-door patch to Red River or Oregon; but not a sign to commemorate the fame of the two men who founded empires in America, greater in area than Great Britain and France and Germany and Spain combined.

It would be interesting from a colonial point of view to know just what qualifications the British Government thought Commander Gordon of the Pacific Squadron and his officers, Lieut. William Peel, son of Sir Robert Peel, and Lieutenant Parke of the Royal Marines, possessed to judge whether Oregon was worth keeping or not. It would be interesting from a purely Canadian point of view. American historians, who ought to be profoundly grateful to Gordon for his blunders, pronounce him the most consummate bungler ever sent on an International mission. Reference has been made in an introductory chapter as to how these naval officers dealt with the matter and the grave injustice they

did the Hudson's Bay Company. Parke and Peel came down to the Columbia and passed some weeks on hunting expeditions up the Walla Walla and the Willamette. They surveyed Fort Vancouver and laughed. All the international pother about that wooden clutter! They observed the colonists and laughed! Why, five hundred marines from any one of their fifteen war ships lying in Puget Sound could send these barefooted, buckskin-clad, tobacco-spitting settlers skipping back over the mountains to the United States like deer before the hunt in English parks! To the two naval officers, these people were but low-living peasants. It did not enter into the narrow vision of their insular minds that out of just such material as these rough pioneers do new nations grow. The two gentlemen regarded the whole expedition as a holiday lark. *They had a good time!* Up on Puget Sound Gordon was serving the British Government still more worthily. He had landed at the Hudson's Bay Company's new post of Victoria—of which more anon. He was given the best that the fur post could offer—table of wild fowl and the Company's best wines, but Half-breed servants do not wait on a table like an English butler; and berth bunks are not English feather beds; and an ocean full of water is not an English bath. Alas and alas, poor gentleman! Such sacrifices is he called to make

The Passing of the Company

for his country's service! Then my gentleman demands what sport. "Deer," says Finlayson, "or bear hunting; or fishing."

"Do you use flies or bait?" asks Gordon with a due sense of condescension for having deigned to enquire about this barbarous land's sport at all. Finlayson must have had some trouble not to choke with laughter when my gentleman insists on fishing with flies in streams where salmon could be scooped in tubfuls. Later, he deigns to go hunting and insists that deer be run down in the open as they hunt in enclosed Scottish game preserves, not still-hunted, which is a barbarous way; with the consequence that Gordon does not get a shot. In vain Finlayson and Douglas, who comes North, try to please this mannikin in gold braid. In response to their admiration of the mighty mountains, he makes answer that goes down to history for civility—"that he would not give the bleakest knoll on the bleakest hill of Scotland for all these mountains in a heap."

Oregon's provisional government forced the boundary dispute to an issue. It must be settled. The Hudson's Bay Company press their case, pleading that if the American colonists are to retain all south of the Columbia, then the Company, having settlers between the Columbia and Puget Sound, should retain all between Columbia River and Puget Sound.

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

The case hangs fire. Gordon is called in. In language which I have given in a former chapter, he declares the country is not worth keeping. Naturally, Aberdeen listens to his own brother's opinion and Peel to his son's. By treaty of June, 1846, England relinquishes claims to all territory south of 49°. Gradually fur trader is crowded out by settler. In 1860, Fort Vancouver is dismantled and taken over as a military station by the United States. Erma-tinger, for having joined the Oregon government, is packed off to a post in Athabasca. Ogden saves himself from punishment by following McLoughlin's example and resigning to become a settler on the Willamette. For the Puget Sound farms, the Company receives compensation of \$450,000 and \$200,000 from the American Government; the former amount payable to the Hudson's Bay Company proper, the latter to the Puget Sound Company, though the shareholders were nominally the same persons.

So ended the glories of the fur trade in Oregon. It still had a few years to run in British Columbia. Long ago McLoughlin had plainly seen the beginning of the end in Oregon and sent Douglas to spy out the site of a permanent fort north of 49°.

It is really one of the most interesting studies in American history to observe—if it can be done with-

The Passing of the Company

out prejudice or prepossession—how when this great Company, changing in its personnel but ever carrying down in its apostolic succession the same traditions of statecraft, of obedience, of secrecy, of diplomacy—how when this great Company had to take a kick, it took it gracefully and always made it a point of being kicked *up*, not down. This is illustrated by the Company's policy now.

Cruising north in June of '42, Douglas notices two magnificent bays north of 49°, on the south end of Vancouver Island opposite what is now British Columbia. The easterly bay named by the Indians, Camosun, meaning rush of waters, offers splendid sea space combined with a shore of plains interspread with good building timber. Also, there are fresh-water streams. The other bay, three miles west, called Esquimalt—the place of gathering of roots—is a better, more land-locked harbor but more difficult of anchorage for small boats. Simpson and McLoughlin decide to build a new fort at Camosun—the modern Victoria. Those, who know the region, need no description of its beauty. To those who do not, descriptions can convey but a faint picture. Islands ever green, in a climate ever mild, dot the far-rolling blue of a summer sea; and where the clouds skirt the water's horizon, there breaks through mid-heaven, ærial and unreal, the fiery and

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

opal dome of Mt. Baker, or the rifted shimmering, ragged peaks of the Olympic Range in Washington. So far are the mountains, so soft the air, that not a shadow, not a line, of the middle heights appear, only the snowy peaks, dazzling and opalescent, with the primrose tinge of the sheet lightning at play like the color waves of Northern Lights. Westward is the sea; eastward, the rolling hills, the forested islands, unexpected vistas of sea among the forests, of precipices rising sheer as wall from the water. Hither comes Douglas to lay the foundations of a new empire.

To Hubert Howe Bancroft the world is indebted for details of the founding of Victoria. Bancroft obtained the facts first-hand from the manuscripts of Douglas, himself. Fifteen men led by Douglas left the Columbia in March, '43. Proceeding up the Cowlitz, they obtained provisions from the Puget Sound Company at Nisqually and embarking on *The Beaver*, March the 13th, at ten A. M., steamed northward for Vancouver Island. At four o'clock, the next afternoon, they anchored just outside Camosun Bay. "On the morning of the 15th of March, Douglas set out from the steamer in a small boat to examine the shore. . . . With the expedition was a Jesuit missionary, Bolduc. . . . Repairing to the great house of the Indian village, the priest harangued the people . . . and baptized them

The Passing of the Company

till arrested by sheer exhaustion. The 16th, having determined on a site, Douglas put his men at work squaring timbers and digging a well. He explained to the natives that he had come to build among them, whereat they were greatly pleased and pressed their assistance on the fort builders, who employed them at the rate of a blanket for every forty pickets they would bring. . . . Sunday, the 19th, Bolduc decided to celebrate mass. Douglas supplied him with men to aid in the holy work. A rustic chapel was improvised; a boat's awning serving as canopy, branches of fir trees enclosing the sides. No cathedral bell was heard that Sabbath morning . . . and yet the Songhies, Clallams, and Cowichins were there, friends and bloody enemies. . . . Bolduc, desirous of carrying the gospel to Whidby Island, was paddled thence on the 24th. . . . ”

While his men proceeded with the building, Douglas went north on *The Beaver* to dismantle Fort Tako and Fort McLoughlin and bring the men from these abandoned posts to assist at Camosun. “The force now numbered fifty men . . . armed to the teeth . . . constantly on guard.” By September, stockades, bastions and dwelling houses were complete. Douglas departed in October, leaving Charles Ross in charge, but Ross died in the spring of '44 and Roderick Finlayson became chief

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

trader at Camosun, first named Albert Fort after the Prince Consort, then Victoria, its present name, after the Queen of England. Finlayson had been in charge of a little post at Bytown—the modern Ottawa, but coming to Oregon had been dispatched north to Stickine.

The steamer had not been long gone when the Cowichin Indians fell to the pastime of slaughtering the fort cattle. Finlayson demanded pay or the surrender of the Indian “rustlers.” The Indian chief laughed the demand to scorn.

“The fort gates will be closed against you,” warned Finlayson.

“And I will batter them down,” retorted the chief.

“The spirit of butchery,” relates Bancroft, “was aroused. Within the fort, watch was kept day and night. After a lapse of two days, the threatened attack was made. Midst savage yells, a shower of musket balls came pattering down upon the fort, riddling the stockades and rattling on the roofs. Instantly, Finlayson shouted his order that not a shot was to be returned. . . . The savages continued their fire . . . then rested from the waste of ammunition. . . . Then the commander (Finlayson) appeared . . . and beckoned (the chief) . . . ‘What would you do?’ exclaimed Finlayson. ‘What evil would you bring upon yourselves! Know



Fort Vancouver, at the bend in Columbia River, where Chief Factor McLoughlin held sway for fifty years, and where the First American Colonists were welcomed and sheltered.

The Passing of the Company

you that with one motion of my finger I could blow you all into the bay? And I will do it! See your houses yonder!’

“Instantly, a nine-pounder belched forth with astounding noise, tearing to splinters the cedar lodge.

“Finlayson had ordered his interpreter to run to the lodges and warn the inmates to instant flight. Hence no damage was done save shivering to splinters some pine slabs.”

The results were what one might expect. The Indians sued for peace, and paid full meed in furs for the slaughtered cattle.

It may be added here as a sample of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s economy in detail—that Fort Victoria was built without the driving of a single nail. Wooden pegs were used. After the relinquishment of Oregon, the old Okanogan-Kamloops trail could be no longer used. Anderson of Fort Alexandria in New Caledonia succeeded in 1845-46 in finding and cutting a new trail down the Fraser to Langley and Victoria. This was the trail that later developed into the famous Cariboo Road of the miners and of which ruins may still be seen clinging to the precipices above the Fraser like basket work, the strands of the basket bridges being huge cedar logs mortised in places for a depth of hundreds of feet. Except where the embankment has crumbled be-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

neath the timber work, Anderson's old fur trail is still used to enter Cariboo. From 1846, one Joseph McKay becomes chief clerk under Chief Factor Douglas of Victoria. Indians brought first word of the famous coal beds of North Vancouver Island. Hence the building of Fort Rupert on Beaver Harbor in '43.

And now occurs the fine play of the Company's rare diplomacy. Rumors of gold in California are arousing the fever that is to result in the pell-mell stampede of the famous '49. At any time, similar discoveries may bring a stampede to the North. No one knew better than the Company those Indian legends of hidden minerals in the Rockies, and when colonists came there would be an end to the fur trade. Did the Company, then—as is often charged—conceal knowledge of precious minerals in its territory? Not at all. It simply let the legends slumber. Its business was not mining. It was fur trading, and the two were utterly hostile.

Came Sir John Pelly, Governor of the Company in England, and Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Company in America, to the Cabinet Minister of Great Britain with a cock-and-bull story of the dangers of an American, not invasion, but deluge such as had swept away British sovereignty in Oregon. What, they ask, is to hinder American colo-

The Passing of the Company

nists rolling in a tide north of the boundary and so establishing rights of possession there as they had in Oregon. Any schoolboy could have guessed the trend of such argument, and let us not blame the Hudson's Bay Company for cupidity. It was a purely commercial organization, not a patriotic or charitable association; and it pursued its aims just as commercial organizations have pursued their aims since time began—namely, by grabbing all they could get. To talk cupidity is nonsense. Cupidity, according to the legal rules of the game, is the business of a money-getting organization. Not the cupidity of the Hudson's Bay Company was to blame for the extraordinary episodes in its history. Place the blame where it belongs—at the door of an ignorance as profound as it was indifferent on the part of the British statesmen who dealt with colonial affairs.

My Lord Grey listens to the warning of this impending disaster. What would the Hudson's Bay Company suggest to counteract such danger? Modestly, generously, with a largesse of self-sacrifice that is appalling to contemplate, the two Hudson's Bay governors offer to accept—*accept*, mind you, not *ask*—the enormous burden of looking after "*all England's possessions in North America.*" As a *quid pro quo*, it is a mere detail of course—they would expect exclusive monopoly of trade in the same

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

regions. It is said when Gladstone, now rising to fame, heard the terms of this offer, he burst out in a loud laugh that brought the blush of misunderstood modesty to the brow of the two Hudson's Bay men. The Company dropped the subject like a hot coal for the matter of a few months to let the coal cool. Then they came at it again with an aggrieved air, demanding government protection for their interests on the Pacific Coast. Earl Grey tumbled into the trap with a celerity that was beautiful. He answered "that the Company must protect themselves." Exactly the answer expected. Then if "the Company must protect themselves from dangers of American encroachment, they ask for exclusive monopoly for purposes of colonization in—Vancouver Island.

For two years furious waxed debate in Parliament and out on this request of the Company. The Hudson's Bay Company as a colonizer was a new rôle. Mr. Isbister, descendant of Red River people and now a barrister in London, has something to say as to how the Hudson's Bay Company act in the colony of Red River, and Mr. Gladstone in Parliament openly and hotly opposes the request on the ground that a company which had a charter of exclusive monopoly for two hundred years entitling it to colonize and had done nothing, had proved itself incompetent as a colonizer.

The Passing of the Company

Furious waxed the debate, but the one thing lacking in all long-drawn out debates is a basis of fact. Only the Hudson's Bay Company possessed the facts about this West Coast. Reports of such government emissaries as Gordon of the Squadron were worse than useless. The opponents were working in the dark. In the House of Commons were several shareholders of the Hudson's Bay Company, chief among them, Ellice, son of the old Nor'Wester.

The request was officially granted in January, 1849, but with such absurd restrictions attached, that any one possessing the slightest knowledge of West Coast conditions must have been aware that the alleged aim to colonize was but a stalking horse for other designs. The Company was to be permitted to retain only one-tenth of the proceeds from its land sales. The other nine-tenths were to be spent improving the island. What bona fide colonization company would accept such conditions? Ten per cent. of land sales would not suffice to pay for advertising. If no settlement were made, the grant was to be revoked in five years. To the colonists, land was to be sold at £1 (\$5.00) an acre. In Oregon, the colonist could have 640 acres for nothing. For every one hundred acres sold at \$5.00 an acre, the buyer was bound by covenant to bring to Vancouver Island at *his* own expense three families, or six single

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

persons. Last of all and most absurd of all, at the end of five or ten years, the Government might buy back the Island by paying to the Company all it had expended. Another point—but this was not in the official terms—retired servants of the Hudson's Bay Company might buy the land at a few shillings an acre. Looking squarely at this extraordinary contract, only one of two conclusions can be reached: either the ignorance of conditions was so dense that dynamite could not have driven a hole through it, or there was no intention whatever of colonizing Vancouver Island, the real design being twofold: (1) on the part of the Government to keep this remote region securely British, for Mormons had talked of escaping persecution by going to Vancouver Island; (2) on the part of the Company, to hold colonizing in its own control to be forwarded or retarded as suited its interests. The Company declared that from the time Lord Grey framed the conditions of the grant, they knew the scheme was foredoomed to failure. This did not prevent them accepting the terms; but the fur traders were too tactful to suggest one of their own men as governor of the new colony. Earl Grey suggested Richard Blanchard, a barrister, as governor; and Blanchard foolishly accepted the appointment without a single stipulation as to residence, salary, land, or staff.

The Passing of the Company

Pelly talked unofficially of the governor being given one thousand acres, but when Blanchard reached Victoria he found that Chief Factor Douglas had received no instructions. The governor of the colony was to have only the use of the one thousand acres, not the possession. One year of such empty honors satisfied Blanchard's ambitions. He had neither house nor salary, subjects nor staff, and came home to England in 1851, £1,000 the poorer. James Douglas, the Chief Factor, was at once appointed Governor of Vancouver Island.

The record of the colony is not a part of the history of the English Adventurers, and therefore is not given here. How many colonists were sent out, I do not know; exclusive of the Company's servants, certainly not more than a dozen; including the Company's servants, not more than three hundred in ten years. Provisions must be bought from the Company. Produce must be sold to the Company—a one-sided performance that easily accounted for the discontent expressed in a memorial sent home with Blanchard when he retired.

The man, who had hauled fish and furs in New Caledonia at \$300 a year, was now governor of Vancouver Island. James Douglas received his commission in September of 1851. Five years ago, he had been compelled to choose between loyalty to

McLoughlin, and loyalty to his Company. He took his choice, was loyal to his Company and had been promoted to a position worth \$15,000 a year. Events were now coming that would compel Douglas to choose between his country and his Company. Wisely, he chose the former, sold out all interests in the Hudson's Bay Company, received knighthood in '59 and died at Victoria full of honors in 1877. Upon renewing the grant of Vancouver Island to the Company in 1854, the English Government requested Douglas to establish representative government in the colony. This was not easy. Electors were scarce, consisting mainly of retired Hudson's Bay officers; and when Douglas met the first parliament of the Island on August 12, 1856, it consisted of less than a dozen members; all directly connected with the Hudson's Bay Company; so that the governor was able to report to England that "the opening" passed off quietly without exciting "interest among the lower orders"—upon which Bancroft, the American, wants to know "who the *lower orders* were" unless "the pigs on the parson's pig farm."

As told in the story of Kamloops, gold was discovered this very year on Thompson River. A year later, the air was full of wild rumors of gold discoveries north of Colville, in Cariboo, on Queen Charlotte Island. The tide, that had rolled over the

The Passing of the Company

mountains to California, now turned to British Columbia. When the second five-year grant of Vancouver Island to the Hudson's Bay Company expired in 1859, it was not renewed. Douglas foresaw that the gold stampede to the North meant a new British empire on the Pacific. The discovery of gold sounded the death knell of the fur lords' ascendancy. Douglas resigned his position as Chief Factor and became governor of the new colony now known as British Columbia, including both Vancouver and the mainland. For the repurchase of Vancouver Island, the British Government paid the Hudson's Bay Company £57,500. The Company claimed that it had spent £80,000. Among the gold seekers stampeding north from Oregon were our old trappers and traders of the mountain brigades, led by Dr. David McLoughlin, now turned prospector.

Notes to Chapter XXXIII.—The contents of this chapter are drawn from the same sources as XXXII; in addition Hansard and Congressional Reports for both the Vancouver Island and Oregon disputes, the Parl. Enquiry Report of 1857; H. B. C. Memorial Book on Puget Sound Company; Fitzgerald's Vancouver Island, 1849; Martin's H. B. Territories, 1849; De Smet's Oregon Missions, 1847; Oregon (Quarterly) Hist. Soc. Report, 1900; Schafer's Pacific Northwest, 1905; and most important—H. H. Bancroft's invaluable transcripts of Douglas and Finlayson MS. in his "British Columbia." For a popular account of McLoughlin from an absolutely American point of view nothing better exists than Mrs. Dye's "Old Oregon," though it may be sniffed at by the higher critics for unquestioning acceptance of what they please to call the "Whitman myth." Whitman's ride was not all myth, though the influence was

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

greatly exaggerated; and the truth probably exists half way between the critics' skepticism and the old legend. Wilkes' Narrative of the Exploring Squadron, 1845; the reports of Warre and Vavasour, the two special spies on McLoughlin; early numbers of the old *B. C. Colonist* and *Cariboo Sentinel*; Sir Geo. Simpson's Journey Round the World; Lord's Naturalist, 1866; Macfie's Vancouver Island, 1865; Mayne's B. C., 1862; Milton's North-West Passage, 1869; Paul Kane's Wanderings, 1859; Dunn's Oregon Territory, 1844; Grant's Ocean to Ocean, 1873; Gray's Oregon, 1870; Greenhow's Oregon, 1844; Dawson's Geol. Reports, Ottawa; Peter Burnett's Letters to *Herald* N. Y.—also throw side lights on the episodes related.

CHAPTER XXXIV

1857-1870

THE PASSING OF THE COMPANY

THE tide of American colonization rolling westward to Minnesota, to Dakota, to Oregon, was not without effect on the little isolated settlement of Red River. Oregon had been wrested from the fur trader, not by diplomacy, but by the rough-handed toiler coming in and taking possession. The same thing happened in British Columbia when the miner came. What was Red River—the pioneer of all the Western colonies—doing?

The union of Nor'Wester and Hudson's Bay had thrown many old employés out of work. These now retired to Red River, where they were granted one hundred acres of land and paid a few shillings an acre for another twenty-eight acres, making up farms of one hundred and twenty-eight acres, all facing the river and running back in long, narrow lots to the highway now known as St. John's Road. St. John's and Kildonan expanded to St. Paul's and St. An-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

drew's settlements northward. Across the river were three sets of settlers—the French Plain Rangers, descendants of the old Nor'Westers, the De Meuron soldiers, and the Swiss. These gradually clustered round the settlement just opposite the Assiniboine, where the Catholic missionaries were building chapel and school, and the place became known as St. Boniface, after the patron saint of the Germans. In the old buildings of Fort Douglas lived the colony governor distinct from the Company governor, Sir George Simpson, whose habitat was Fort Garry, near the site of old Fort Gibraltar, when he was in the West, and Lachine, at Montreal, when he was in the East.

The colonists continued to hunt buffalo in Minnesota during the winter and to cultivate their farms in the summer; but what to do for a market? Colonists in Oregon could sell their produce to the Spaniards, or the Russians, or the Yankee skippers passing up and down the coast. Colonists in British Columbia found a market with the miners, but to whom could the Red River farmer sell but to the fur company? For his provisions from England, he paid a freight of 33 per cent. ocean rate, 58 per cent. profit to the Company, and another 20 per cent. land rate from Hudson Bay to Red River—a total of over 110 per cent. advance on all purchases. For what he sold to the Company, he received only the lowest

The Passing of the Company

price, and he might on no account sell furs. Furs were the exclusive prerogative of the Company. For his produce, he was credited on the books, but the credit side seldom balanced the debit side; and on the difference the Red River settler was charged 5 per cent.—not a high debtors' rate when it is considered that it was levied by a monopoly, that had absolute power over the debtor; and that the modern debtors' rate is legalized at 6 and 8 per cent. It was not the rate charged that discouraged the Red River settler; but the fact that paying an advance of 110 per cent. on all purchases and receiving only the lowest market price for all farm produce—two shillings-six pence for wheat a bushel—he could never hope by any possibility to make his earnings and his spendings balance. Mr. Halkett, a relative of Selkirk's, came out in 1822, to settle up the affairs of the dead nobleman. The Company generously wrote off all debt, which was accumulated interest, and remitted one-fifth of the principal to all settlers.

Mr. Halkett and Sir George Simpson then talked over plans to create a market for the colonist. These successive plans and their successive failures belong to the history of the colony rather than the history of the Company, and cannot be fully given here.

There was the Buffalo Wool Company of 1822, under Pritchard's management, which set all the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

farmers scouring the plains as buffalo hunters with schemes as roseate as the South Sea Bubble; and like the South Sea Bubble the roseate scheme came to grief. It cost \$12.50 a yard to manufacture cloth that sold for only \$1.10; and the Hudson's Bay Company wrote a loss of \$12,000 off their books for this experiment.

Alex MacDonell, a bottle-loving Scotchman, who had acted as governor of the colony after Semple's death, and who became notorious as "the grasshopper governor" because his régime caused the colonists as great grief as the grasshopper plague—now gave place to Governor Bulger. Over at the Company fort, John Clarke of Athabasca fame, now returned from Montreal with an aristocratic Swiss lady as his bride—acts as Chief Factor under Governor Simpson.

The next essay is to send Laidlaw down to Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi to buy a stock of seed wheat to be rafted up the Mississippi across a portage and down the Red River. He buys two hundred and fifty bushels at \$2.40 a bushel, but what with rafting and incidentals before it reaches the colonist, it has cost the Hudson's Bay Company £1,040. Next, an experimental farm must be tried to teach these new colonists how to farm in the new country. The same Mr. Laidlaw with the same

The Passing of the Company

grand ideas is put in charge of the Hayfield Farm. It is launched with the style of a baronial estate—fine houses, fine stables, a multitude of servants, a liberal tap in the wine cellar; and a total loss to the Hudson's Bay Company of £2,000. There follow experiments of driving sheep to Red River all the way from Missouri, and of a Wool Company that ends as the Buffalo Company had, and of flax growing, the flax rotting in the fields for lack of a purchaser. What with disastrous experiments and a grasshopper plague and a flood that floats the houses of half the population down the ice-jammed current of the raging Red, the De Meurons and Swiss become discouraged. It was noticed during the flood that the De Meurons had an unusual quantity of hides and beef to sell; and that the settlers had extraordinary difficulty finding their scattered herds. What little reputation the De Meurons had, they now lost; and many of them with their Swiss neighbors deserted Red River for the new settlements of Minnesota. From ranging the plains with the buffalo hunters of Pembina, the Swiss came on south to Fort Snelling, near modern St. Paul, and so formed the nucleus of the first settlements in Minnesota. It has been charged that the Hudson's Bay Company never meant any of these experiments to succeed; that it designed them so they would fail and prove

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

to the world the country was unfit for settlement. Such a charge is far-fetched with just enough truth to give the falsity semblance. The Company were not farmers. They were traders, and it is not surprising that fur men's experiments at farming should be a failure; but that the Hudson's Bay Company deliberately went to work to throw away sums of money ranging from \$5,000 to \$17,000 will hardly be credited with those who know the inner working of an organization whose economy was so strict it saved nails when it could use wooden pegs.

American herdsmen as an experiment had driven up herds of cattle to sell to the Red River colonists. This was the beginning of trade with St. Paul. Henceforward, what produce Red River people could not sell to the Hudson's Bay Company, was sent to St. Paul. Then the St. Paul traders paid higher prices than the Hudson's Bay Company. Twice a year the long lines of Red River ox carts, like Eastern caravans, creaked over the looping prairie trail of Red River southward to St. Paul with buffalo hides and farm products. These carts were famous in their day. They were built entirely of wood, hub, spokes, rim and tire of wheel, pegs even taking the place of nails. Hence, if a cart broke down on the way, it could be mended by recourse to the nearest clump of brushwood. The Sioux were at this time



Interior of Fort Garry or Winnipeg in 1870. The figure standing with arm extended a little to the left of the flag is Donald Smith, now Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, then but newly come from the wilds of Labrador and commissioned by the Canadian Government to try and pacify the Half-breed Rebels led by Riel.

The Passing of the Company

the greatest danger to the cart brigades, and the settlers always traveled together for protection; but the Indians wished to stay on good terms with the Hudson's Bay Company, and had the settlers carry an H. B. C. flag as a signal of friendship with the fur traders. Within a few years, twelve hundred Red River carts rumbled and creaked their way to St. Paul in June and September. Simpson had issued Hudson's Bay Company notes of £1, 5 shillings and 1 shilling, to avoid the account system, and these notes were always redeemable at any fur post for Company goods, but in St. Paul, the settlers for the first time began using currency that was coin.

Early in the thirties, possibly owing to the dangers from the Sioux, Governor Simpson ordered the building of the stone forts—Upper Fort Garry as a stronghold for the Company, Lower Fort Garry near St. Andrew's Rapids twenty miles north, as a residence for himself and trading post for the lake Indians. These were the last stone forts built by the fur trader in America. Of Upper Fort Garry there remains to-day only the old gray stone gate, to be seen at the south end of Main Street in Winnipeg. Lower Fort Garry yet stands as Simpson had it built—the last relic of feudalism in America—high massive stone walls with stores and residence in the court yard.

Other operations Simpson pushed for the Com-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

pany. McLean is sent in '37 to explore the interior of Labrador. John Clarke is dispatched to establish forts down MacKenzie River almost to the Arctic. Bell goes overland, in 1846, to the Yukon. Murray, later of Pembina, builds Fort Yukon, and Campbell between 1840 and 1848 explores both the Pelly and the Yukon, building Fort Selkirk.

The explorations that had begun when Radisson came to Hudson Bay in his canoe from Lake Superior, were now completed by the Company's boats going down the MacKenzie to the Arctic and down the Yukon to Bering Sea. How big was the empire won from savagery by fur trader? Within a few thousand miles of the same size as Europe. Spain won a Mexico and a Peru from savagery; but her soldiers' cruelty outdid the worst horrors of Indian warfare, steeped every mile of the forward march with the blood of the innocent natives, and reduced those natives to a state of slavery that was a hell upon earth. The United States won an empire from savagery, but she did it by an ever-shifting frontier, that was invariably known from Tennessee to Oregon, as "the Bloody Ground." Behind that shifting frontier was the American pioneer with his sharpshooter. In front of that frontier was the Indian with his tomahawk. Between them was the Bloody Ground. In the sixteen-hundreds, that Bloody

The Passing of the Company

Ground was west of the Alleghanies in Ohio and Tennessee and Kentucky. In the seventeen-hundreds, it had shifted forward to the Mississippi. In the eighteen-hundreds, it was on the plains and in the mountains and in Oregon. Always, the forward step of white man, the backward step of red man—had meant a battle, bloodshed; now the colonists wiped out by the Sioux in Minnesota; or the missionaries massacred by the Cayuse in Oregon; or the Indians shot down and fleeing to the caves of the mountains like hunted animals.

How many massacres marked the forward march of the Hudson's Bay Company from Atlantic to Pacific? Not one. The only massacre, that of Seven Oaks, was a fight of fur trader against fur trader. The raids such as Hearne saw on the Coppermine were raids of tribe on tribe, not white man on Indian, nor Indian on white man. "Smug old lady," enemies designated the Hudson's Bay Company. "Oppressor, monopoly, intriguing aristocrats," the early settlers of Oregon called her. Grant all the sins of omission common to smug, conservative old ladies! Grant all the sins of commission—greed, secrecy, craft, subterfuge—common the world over to monopolies! *Of these things and more was the Hudson's Bay Company guilty in its long despotic reign of two hundred years. But set over against its sins,*

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

this other fact, a record which no other organization in the world may boast—the bloodless conquest of an empire from savagery!

Apart from Selkirk's friends, the Hudson's Bay Company had never been favorable to the idea of colonizing Red River. Now that the colonists had opened connections with American traders of St. Paul, it became evident that the Hudson's Bay must relinquish sovereignty over Red River Colony, or buy out Selkirk's interests and own the colony, lock, stock and barrel. In 1835, the heirs of Lord Selkirk sold back to the Hudson's Bay Company the vast grant of Red River for some £84,000. The sum seems large, but I doubt if it covered a tenth of what Selkirk had spent, for it will be recalled, though he intended in the first place *to sell* the land, he ended by giving it to the settlers scot free. To-day, the sum for which Selkirk's heirs sold back Red River, would hardly buy a corner lot on Main Street, Winnipeg. Selkirk's heirs retained their shares in Hudson's Bay stock, which ultimately paid them back many times over what Selkirk had lost.

Why did the Company buy back Red River? Behold the sequence! Settlers are crowding into Minnesota. The settlers of Red River are beginning to ask for a form of government. They want to

The Passing of the Company

rule themselves as the Americans do south of the boundary. Good! The Company will take care there is no independent government such as was set up in Oregon and ended by ousting the fur trader. The Company will give the settlers a form of government. The Council of Assiniboia is organized. President of the Council is Sir George Simpson, governor of the Company. Vice-president is Alex Christie, governor of the colony; and the other thirteen members are old Hudson's Bay officers. The government of Assiniboia is nothing more or less than a Company oligarchy; but that serves the Hudson's Bay better than an independent government, or a government friendly to the American traders. But deeper and more practical reason lies beneath this move. Selkirk's colony was not to interfere with the fur trade. Before the Red River carts set out for St. Paul it is customary for the Hudson's Bay officers to search the cargoes. More! They search the settlers' houses, poking long sticks up the deep set chimney places for hidden furs; and sometimes the chimney casts out cached furs, which are confiscated. Old French Nor'Westers begin to ask themselves—is this a free country? The Company responds by burning down the shanties of two hunters on Lake Manitoba in 1826, who had dared to trade furs from the Indians. These furs, the two Frenchmen no

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

doubt meant to sell to St. Paul traders who paid just four times higher than the Hudson's Bay. Altogether, it is safer for the Company to buy out Selkirk's colony themselves and organize laws and police to enforce the laws—especially the supremest law—against illicit fur trading.

First test of the new government comes in 1836, when one St. Dennis is sentenced to be flogged for theft. A huge De Meuron is to wield the lash, but this spectacle of jury law in a land that has been ruled by paternalism for two hundred years, ruled by despot's strong right arm—is something so repugnant to the Plain Rangers, they stone the executioner and chase him till he jumps into a well. In 1844 is issued proclamation that all business letters sent through the Company must be left open for perusal, and that land will be deeded to settlers only on condition of forfeiture if illicit trade in furs be discovered. In fact, as that intercourse with the American traders of the Mississippi increases, it is as difficult for the Company to stop illicit fur trading as for customs officers to stop smuggling.

That provisional government in Oregon had caught the Company napping. Not so shall it be in Red River. If the despot must have a standing army to enforce his laws, an army he shall have. The experience in Oregon furnishes a good excuse.

The Passing of the Company

The Company asks and the British Government sends out the Sixth Royal Regiment of five hundred men under Colonel Crofton. Now laws shall be enforced and provisional governments kept loyal, and when Colonel Crofton leaves, there comes in 1848, Colonel Caldwell with one hundred old pensioners, who may act as an army if need be, but settle down as colonists and impart to Red River somewhat of the gayety and pomp and pleasure seeking, leisurely good fellowship of English garrison life. Year after year for twenty years, crops have been bounteous. Flocks have multiplied. Granaries are bursting with fullness of stores. Though there is no market, there is plenty in the land. Though there is little coin current of the realm, there is no want; and the people stuck off here at the back of beyond take time to enjoy life. Thatched shanties have given place to big, spacious, comfortable houses; dog sleighs to gay carioles with horses decked in ribbons. Horse racing is the passion and the pastime. Schools and embryo colleges and churches have been established by the missionaries of the different denominations, whose pioneer labors are a book in themselves. It is a happy primitive life, with neither wealth nor poverty, of almost *Arcadian* simplicity, and cloudless but for that shadow—illicit trade, monopoly. Could the life but have lasted, I

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

doubt if American history could show its parallel for quiet, care-free, happy-go-lucky, thoughtless-of-the-morrow contentment. The French of *Acadia*, perhaps, somewhat resembled Red River colony, but we have grown to view Acadia through Longfellow's eyes. Beneath the calm surface there was international intrigue. Military life gave a dash of color to Red River that Longfellow's Acadians never possessed; but beneath the calm of Red River, too, was intrigue.

Resentment against search for furs grew to anger. The explosion came over a poor French Plain Ranger, William Sayer, and three friends, arrested for accepting furs from Indians in May, 1849. Judge Thom, the Company's recorder, was to preside in court. Thom was noted for hatred for the French in his old journalistic days in Montreal. The arrest suddenly became a social question—the French Plain Rangers of the old Nor'Westers against the English Company, with the Scotch settlers looking on only too glad of a test case against the Company. Louis Riel, an old miller of the Seine near St. Boniface, father of the Riel to become notorious later, harangued the Plain Rangers and French settlers like a French revolutionist discoursing freedom. The day of the trial, May 17th, Plain Rangers were seen riding from all directions to the Fort Garry Court House. At 10



**Rough Map of North America, showing Areas explored
by Fur Trades, (1) Alaska by Russians, (2) Canada and U. S.
by H. B. Co. & North-Western from 1670 to 1846.**

The Passing of the Company

A. M. they had stacked four hundred guns against the outer wall and entered the court in a body. Not till 1 P. M. did the court dare to call for the prisoner, William Sayer. As he walked to the bar of justice, the Plain Rangers took up their guns and followed him in. Boldly, Sayer pleaded guilty to the charge of trading furs. It was to be a test case, but test cases are the one thing on earth the Hudson's Bay Company avoided. The excuse was instantly unearthed or invented that a man connected with the Hudson's Bay Company had given Sayer permission; perhaps, verbal license to trade. So the case was compromised—a verdict of guilty, but the prisoner honorably discharged by the court. The Plain Rangers took no heed of legal quibbles. To them, the trial meant that henceforth trade was free. With howls of jubilation, they dashed from the court carrying Sayer and shouting, "*Vive la liberté*—commerce is free—trade is free"; and spent the night discharging volleys of triumph and celebrating victory.

Isbister, the young lawyer, forwards to the Secretary of State for the Colonies petition after petition against the Company's monopoly. The settlers, who now number five thousand, demanded liberty of commerce and British laws. The petitions are ignored. Isbister vows they are shelved through the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

intrigue of the Hudson's Bay Company in London. Then five hundred settlers petition the Legislature of Canada. The Toronto Board of Trade takes the matter up in 1857, and Canadian surveyors are sent west to open roads to Red River. "It is plain," aver the various petitions and memorials of 1857-59, "that Red River settlement is being driven to one of two destinies. Either she must be permitted to join the other Canadian colonies, or she will be absorbed by a provisional American government such as captured Oregon." Sir George Simpson, prince of tacticians, dies. Both the British Government and the Hudson's Bay Company are at sea. There is no denying what happened to Oregon when the Company held on too long. They drove Oregon into Congress. May not the same thing happen in Red River—in which case the Company's compensation will be *nil*. Then—there is untold history here—a story that must be carried on where I leave off and which will probably never be fully told till the leading actors in it have passed away. There are ugly rumors of a big fund among the Minnesota traders, as much as a million dollars, to be used for secret service money to swing Red River Settlement into the American Union. Was it a Fenian fund? Who held the fund? Who set the scheme going?

The Passing of the Company

The Hudson's Bay Company knows nothing. It only fears. The British Government knows nothing; except that in such a way did it lose Oregon; and the United States is now buying Alaska from Russia. With its policy of matchless foresight, the Hudson's Bay Company realizes it is wiser to retire early with the laurels and rewards than to retreat too late stripped. The question of renewing the license on Vancouver Island is on the carpet. The Hudson's Bay Company welcomes a Parliamentary Enquiry into every branch of its operations. "We would be glad to get rid of the enormous burden of governing these territories, *if it can be done equitably as to our possessory rights,*" the Company informs the astonished Parliamentary Committee.

How stand those possessory rights under the terms of union in 1821? It will be remembered the charter rights were not then tested. They were merged with the Northwest Company rights, and without any test a license of exclusive trade granted for twenty-one years. That license was renewed in 1838 for another twenty-one years. This term is just expiring when the Company declares it would be glad to be rid of its burden, and welcomes a Parliamentary Enquiry. At that inquiry, friends and foes alike testify. Old officers like Ellice give evidence. So do Sir George Simpson, and Blanchard of Van-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

couver Island, and Isbister as representative of the Red River colonists, and Chief Justice Draper as representative of Canada. It is brought out the Company rules under three distinct licenses:

(1) Over Rupert's Land or the territory of the bay proper by right of its first charter.

(2) Over Vancouver Island by special grant of 1849.

(3) Over all the Indian Territory between the bay and Vancouver Island by the license of 1821 since renewed.

The Parliamentary committee recommend on July 31, 1857, that Vancouver Island be given up; that just as soon as Canada is ready to take over the government of the Indian Territory this, too, shall be ceded; but that for the present in order to avoid the demoralization of Indians by rival traders, Rupert's Land be left in the exclusive control of the Hudson's Bay Company. This is the condition of affairs when unrest arises in Red River.

The committee also bring out the fact that the capital has been increased since the union of 1821 to £500,000. Of the one hundred shares into which this is divided, forty have been set aside for the wintering partners or chief factors and chief traders. These forty shares are again subdivided into eighty-five parts. Two eighty-fifths of the profits equal to

The Passing of the Company

\$3,000 a year and a retiring fund of \$20,000 are the share of a chief factor; one eighty-fifth, the share of a chief trader. This is what is known as "the deed poll."

Meanwhile, out in Red River, gold seekers bound for Cariboo, prospectors for the bad lands of Montana, settlers for the farms of Minnesota—roll past in a tide. Trade increases in jumps. A steamer runs on Red River connecting by stage for St. Paul. Among the hosts of new comers to Red River is one Doctor Schultz, who helps to establish the newspaper, *Nor'Wester*, which paper has the amazing temerity, in 1867, to advocate that in the Council of Assiniboia there should be some representative of the people independent of the Hudson's Bay Company. A vacancy occurs in the council. *The Nor'Wester* advocates that Dr. John Schultz would be an excellent representative to fill that vacancy. A great many of the settlers think so, too; for among other newcomers to the colony is one Thomas Spence, of Portage la Prairie, who is for setting up a provisional government of Manitoba. A government independent of British connection means only one thing—annexation. The settlers want to see Schultz on the Council of Assiniboia to counteract domination by the Hudson's Bay and to steer away from annex-

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

ation. Not so the Hudson's Bay Company. Schultz's paper has attacked them from the first, and the little store of which he is part proprietor, has been defiant opposition under their very noses. But this council business is too much. They will squelch Schultz, and do it legally, too. In all new countries, the majority of pioneers are at some stage of the game in debt. Against Schultz's firm stood a debt of a few hundred dollars. Schultz swore he had discharged the debt by paying the money to his partner. Owing to his partner's absence in England, his evidence could neither be proved nor disproved. The Company did not wait. Judgment was entered against Schultz and the sheriff sent to seize his goods. Moral resistance failing, Schultz resisted somewhat vigorously with the poker. This was misdemeanor with a vengeance—probably the very thing his enemies hoped, for he was quickly overpowered, tied round the arms with ropes, and whisked off in a cariole to prison. But his opponents had not counted on his wife—the future Lady Schultz, life partner of the man who was governor of Manitoba for eight years. That very night the wife of the future Sir John led fifteen men across to the prison, ordered the guides knocked aside, the doors battered open, and her husband liberated. His arrest was not again attempted, and at a later trial for the debt,

The Passing of the Company

Schultz was vindicated. His party emerged from the fracas ten times stronger.

Here, then, were three parties all at daggers drawn—the Hudson's Bay Company standing stiffly for the old order of things and marking time till the negotiations in England gave some cue for a new policy; the colonists asking for a representative government, which meant union with Canada, waiting till negotiations for Confederation gave them some cue; the independents, furtive, almost nameless, working in the dark, hand in hand with that million dollar fund, watching for their opportunity. And there was a fourth party more inflammable than these—the descendants of the old Nor'Westers—the Plain Rangers, French Metis all of them, led by Louis Riel, son of the old miller, wondering restlessly what their part was to be in the reorganization. Were their lands to be taken away by these surveyors coming from Canada? Were they to be whistled by the independents under the Stars and Stripes? They and their fathers had found this land and explored it and ranged its prairies from time immemorial. Who had better right than the French Half-breeds to this country. Compared to them, the Scotch settlers were as newcomers. Of them, the other three parties were taking small thought. The Metis rallied to Louis Riel's

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

standard to protect their rights, whichever of the other three parties came uppermost in the struggle. Poor children of the wilds, of a free wilderness life forever past! Their leader was unworthy, and their stand a vain breakwater against the inward rolling tide of events resistless as destiny!

The Company had told the Parliamentary Committee of '57 that it would willingly remit the burden of governing its enormous territory if adequate returns were made for its possessory rights. Without going into the question of these rights, a syndicate of capitalists, called the International Financial Association, jumped at the chance to buy out the old Hudson's Bay. Chief negotiator was Edward Watkins, who was planning telegraph and railroad schemes for British America. "About what would the price be?" he had casually asked Ellice, now an old man—the same Ellice who had negotiated the union of Hudson's Bay and Nor'Westers in '21. "Oh, perhaps a million-and-a-half," ruminated Ellice; but Berens, whose family had held Hudson's Bay stock for generations, was of a different mind. "What?" he roared in a manner the quintessence of insult, "sequester our lands? Let settlers go in on our hunting ground?" But the cooler heads proved the wiser heads. It was "take what you can get

The Passing of the Company

now, or risk losing all later! Whether you will or not, charter or no charter, settlers are coming and can't be stopped. Canadian politicians are talking of your charter as an outrage, as *spoliation*! Their surveyors are already on the ground! Judge for yourselves whether it is worth while to risk the repetition of Oregon; or attempt resisting settlement."

Members of the International Financial Association met Berens, Colville—representative of the Selkirk interests—and two other Hudson's Bay directors in the dark old office of the Board Room, Fenchurch Street, on the 1st of February, in 1862. Watkins describes the room as dingy with faded green cover on the long table and worn dust-grimed chairs. Berens continued to storm like a fishwife; but it was probably part of the game. On June 1, 1863, the International Association bought out the Hudson's Bay Company for £1,500,000. The Company that had begun in Radisson's day, two hundred years before, with a capital of \$50,000 (£10,000) now sold to the syndicate for \$7,500,000, and the stock was resold to new shareholders in a new Hudson's Bay Company at a still larger capital. The question was what to do about the forty shares belonging to the chief factors and traders. When word of the sale came to them in Canada, they naturally felt as the minority shareholder always feels—that they

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

had been sold out without any compensation, and the indignation in the service was universal. But this injustice was avoided by another unexpected move in the game.

While financiers were dickering for Hudson's Bay stock, Canadian politicians brought about confederation of all the Canadian colonies in 1867, and a clause had been introduced in the British North America Act that it should "be lawful to admit Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories into the Union." The Hon. William McDougall had introduced resolutions in the Canadian House praying that Rupert's Land be united in the Confederation. With this end in view, Sir George Cartier and Mr. McDougall proceeded to England to negotiate with the Company. In October, 1869, the new Hudson's Bay Company relinquished all charter and exclusive rights to the Dominion. The Dominion in turn paid over to the Company £300,000; granted it one-twentieth of the arable land in its territory, and ceded to it rights to the land on which its forts were built. From the £300,000, paid by Canada, £157,055 were set aside to buy out the rights of the wintering partners. How valuable one-twentieth of the arable land was to prove, the Company, itself, did not realize till recent days, and what wealth it gained from the cession of land where its forts stood, may be

The Passing of the Company

guessed from the fact that at Fort Garry (Winnipeg) this land comprised five hundred acres of what are now city lots at metropolitan values. Where its forts stood, it had surely won its laurels, for the ground was literally baptized with the blood of its early traders; just as the tax-free sites of rich religious orders in Quebec were long ago won by the blood of Catholic martyrs of whom newcomers knew nothing. Whether the rest of the bargain—the payment of £300,000 for charter rights, which Canadians repudiated, and the cession of one-twentieth of the country's arable land—were as good a bargain for Canada as for the Hudson's Bay Company, I must leave to be discussed by the writer who takes up the story where I leave off. Certainly both sides have made tremendous gains from the bargain.

A year later, Red River Settlement came into Confederation under the name which Spence had given the country of his Provisional Government—Manitoba, “the country of the people of the lakes.”

So passed the Company as an empire builder. In Oregon, its passing was marked by the terrible conflagration of Indian massacres. In British Columbia, the old order gave place to the new in a wild gold stampede. In Manitoba, the monopoly had not been surrendered before Riel put a match to the

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

inflammable passions of his wild Plain Rangers, that set the country in a flame.

As for the Company, it had played its part, and its day was done. On that part, I have no verdict. Its history is its verdict, and it is only fair to judge it by the codes of feudalism rather than democracy. Judging by the codes of feudalism, there are few baronial or royal houses of two hundred years' reign with as little to blush for or hide away among family skeletons as the "Gentlemen Adventurers Trading to Hudson's Bay." Trickery? To be sure; but then, it was an old order fighting a new, an old fencer trying to parry the fancy thrusts of an enemy with a new style of sword play. The old order was Feudalism. The new was Democracy.

The Company's ships still ply the waters of the North. Its canoe brigades still bring in the furs to the far fur posts. Its mid-winter dog trains still set the bells tinkling over the lonely wastes of Northern snows and it still sells as much fur at its great annual sales as in its palmiest days. But the Hudson's Bay Company is no longer a gay Adventurer setting sail over the seas of the Unknown. It is no longer a Soldier of Fortune, with laugh for life or death carving a path through the wilderness. It is now but a commercial organization with methods similar to other money-getting companies. Free traders over-

The Passing of the Company

run its hunting grounds. Rivals as powerful as itself are now on the field fighting the battle of competition according to modern methods of business rivalry. Three-quarters of its old hunting fields are already carved up in the checkerboard squares of new provinces and fenced farm patches. The glories of the days of its empire as Adventurer, as Soldier of Fortune, as Pathfinder, as Fighter, as Gamester of the Wilderness—have gone forever to that mellow Golden Age of the Heroic Past.

Notes to Chapter XXXIV.—The authorities for this chapter are H. B. C. Archives; the Parl. Report of 1857; Canadian Hansard, and local data gathered on the spot when I lived in Winnipeg. Dr. George Bryce is the only writer who has ever attempted to tell the true inward story of the first Riel Rebellion. I do not refer to his hints of "priestly plots." These had best been given in full or left unsaid, but I do refer to his reference to the danger of Red River going as Oregon had gone—over to a Provisional Government, which would have meant war; and I cannot sufficiently regret that this story is not given in full. In another generation, there will be no one living who can tell that story; and yet one can understand why it may have to remain untold as long as the leading actors are alive.

I do not touch on the Riel Rebellion in this chapter, as it belongs to the history of the colony rather than the company; and if I gave it, I should also have to give the Whitman Massacres of Oregon and the Gold Stampede of B. C., which I do not consider inside the scope of the history of the company as empire builder. Much of thrilling interest in the lives of the colonists I have been compelled to omit for the same reason; for instance, the Sioux massacres in Minnesota, the adventures of the buffalo hunters, such heroism as that of Hesse, the flood in Red River, the splendid work of the different missionaries as they came, the comical half garrison life of the old pensioners, including the terrible suicide of an officer at Fort Douglas over a love affair. Whoever tells the story where I have left off will have these pegs to hang his chapters on; and I envy him the pleasure of his work, whether the story be swung along as a

The Conquest of the Great Northwest

record of the pioneer, or of Lord Strathcona—the Frontenac of the West—or of the great Western missionaries.

Two or three discrepancies bother me in this chapter, which the wise may worry over, and the innocent leave alone. In Parl. Inquiry, 1857, Ellice gives the united capital of H. B. C. and N. W. C. in 1821, as £400,000. As I made transcripts of the minutes in H. B. C. House, London, I made it £250,000. In any case, it was increased to five before the Int. Fin. Association took hold.

Another point, the new company paid £1,500,000 for the stock. The stock sold to the public totalled a larger capital—much larger. I do not give this total, though I have it, because at a subsequent period the company retired part of its capital by returning it to the shareholders, if you like to put it that way; or paying a dividend which practically amounted to a retirement. That comes so late in the Company's history, I feel it has no place here. Therefore, to name the former large capital would probably only mislead the reader.

It was in the days of Alex MacDonell, the grasshopper governor, that the traders used to turn a whiskey bottle upside down filled with sand, neck to neck on another whiskey bottle, making an hour-glass, and drink till all the sand ran from the upper bottle, when if the thirst was not quenched, both bottles were reversed to begin the revels over again. If tradition is to be trusted, the same hour bottle was much to blame for the failures of the experimental farms.

The widow of John Clarke, who came a bride to the West in 1822, and lived in the palmy Arcadian days of Red River, is still living in Montreal, aged 105, and has just at this date (1907) had her daughter issue a little booklet of the most charmingly quaint reminiscences I have enjoyed in many a day.

Ross and Hargrave and Gunn are the great authorities for the days between 1820 and 1870, with other special papers to be found in the Manitoba Hist. Soc. Series.

In several places I use dollar terms. Down to 1870 all H. B. C. calculations were in £, s., d.

One there is who owes the world her reminiscences of this fascinating era; and that is Lady Schultz, but the people who have lived adventure are not keen for the limelight of telling it, and I fear this story will not be given to the world.

The Passing of the Company

It may be interesting to admirers of that campaigner of the Conservative Party, Sir John MacDonald, to know that the terms "spoliation and outrage" as applied to the H. B. C. charters originated in a speech of Sir John's.

The adventures of the Swiss, who moved from Red River down to Fort Snelling, at St. Paul, will be found very fully given in the Minnesota Hist. Society's Collections and in the Macalester College Collections of St. Paul. Mrs. Charlotte Ouisconsin Van Cleve's Memoirs of Fort Snelling tell the tragic tale of the Tully murder in 1823, when the little boy, John, of Red River, was brought into Fort Snelling half scalped, and Andrew was adopted into her own family.

THE END

Set up, electrotyped, printed and bound at
THE OUTING PRESS
Deposit, New York



